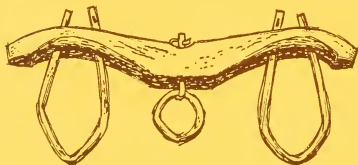


THE LAST DAYS OF  
LINCOLN

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THE LAST DAYS OF  
LINCOLN



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# THE LAST DAYS OF LINCOLN

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*A Play in Six Scenes*

——— *by* ———

MARK VAN DOREN

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HILL AND WANG - NEW YORK - 1959

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To John

1584.5.8.10.11.12.13.14.15.16.17.18.19.20.21.22.23.24.25.



## PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

THE FOLLOWING comments about this play by Mark Van Doren are selected by the publisher from his recently published *Autobiography*.\*

"I had begun to think [in 1950] I might write a long poem [about Lincoln] . . . who from my childhood [in Illinois] had been for me the richest and deepest character in a past I could think of as my own. He was tragic and he was comic; and furthermore, he was from Illinois.

. . . . .

"My concern with him [Lincoln] had long since narrowed down to the last years, indeed the last months, of the terrible war over which, by an irony almost unique, this rational, good man was called upon to preside; and I had begun to think, because of the way his story shrank into one drop of bitter and sweet pain, that a play was indicated rather than a narrative poem. The end of his life was what mattered.

. . . . .

". . . In May [1954] I went to Raleigh, North Carolina, to Fayetteville, Arkansas, and to Detroit: a round trip that took a week's time, and in that time I wrote my Lincoln play.

\* *The Autobiography of Mark Van Doren*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1958.

"It began in Raleigh, when I had an idle day in the hotel and wondered how I should spend it. I had not planned to begin the play yet; I had no books or notes with me, and I had scarcely settled upon the whereabouts of the opening scene. Nor had I made any attempt to discover whether I could write dialogue. Then suddenly I was doing it. Lincoln walked into his office at the White House where John Hay and William Stoddard were sorting letters for him to see, and I could hear what he said to them. From then on there was no insoluble problem. I wrote all day, and part of the next day on a train to Memphis. In Fayetteville I kept it up between engagements, and on the train between St. Louis and Detroit. I scribbled without stopping in the bound black notebook I always take with me just in case. . . . I finished the last scene before I was in Cornwall again.

. . . . .

"I took certain liberties with the record: I kept Joshua Speed, Lincoln's old Springfield friend, more closely on hand in Washington than he could have been during the last weeks of the war; but he had to be there as Horatio has to be in *Hamlet*, so I brought him on from Louisville and never let him go. The scenes themselves were the natural ones that had stood out in my reading: at City Point, where Lincoln and Grant discussed the terms Lee would be given when he surrendered; in Richmond after its fall; then back in the White House where Lincoln maneuvered daily against senators who would have him consider another policy toward the beaten South than the one he had determined to pursue. The entire reference of the play was to the time after the war, the time Lincoln did not live to see. The irony and the pity were in that. And all the while, if I may say so again, I could hear Lincoln talking. I could almost hear him thinking. And this was just as true in subsequent months or years when with Johnny's help [the author's son] I revised the play. Opened at any seam, it contained the same man, the common man whom no other man resembles."

THE LAST DAYS OF  
LINCOLN





## LIST OF PERSONS

### *In the Order of Their Appearance*

CHARLES A. DANA, *Assistant Secretary of War*  
TWO ANONYMOUS GENTLEMEN  
MARY TODD LINCOLN, *Wife of the President*  
JOSHUA SPEED, *Abraham Lincoln's oldest friend*  
MISS CLARA HARRIS, *a guest of Mrs. Lincoln*  
CHARLES SUMNER, *Senator from Massachusetts*  
JUSTICE DAVID DAVIS, *of the Supreme Court*  
JOHN HAY, *Secretary to the President*  
WILLIAM STODDARD, *Assistant Secretary to the President*  
EZRA, *a Negro servant in the White House*  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN, *President of the United States*  
A WOMAN, *Mother of three Union soldiers*  
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WADE, *Senator from Ohio*  
ADMIRAL DAVID D. PORTER, *U. S. Navy*  
A CORPORAL  
TWO PRIVATES  
GENERAL U. S. GRANT, *Commander in Chief of the Union Armies*  
MRS. GRANT  
NEGROES, *in Richmond*  
ROBERT, *a Negro, formerly butler to Jefferson Davis*  
A LIEUTENANT OF CAVALRY  
DUFF GREEN, *Southern journalist, promoter, and patriot*  
GENERAL GODFREY WEITZEL, *Commanding Union troops in Richmond*  
JUSTICE JOHN A. CAMPBELL, *Assistant Secretary of War for the Confederacy*  
EDWIN M. STANTON, *Secretary of War*  
ZACHARIAH CHANDLER, *Senator from Michigan*  
A DOCTOR

SCENES: Washington

City Point, Virginia

Richmond, Virginia

Washington

TIME: March and April, 1865

# Scene One

*A room in William Peterson's house, across the street from Ford's Theatre, Washington, a few minutes after seven o'clock on the morning of April 15, 1865.*

*A few chairs; an open window through which sounds arrive of a crowd in constant agitation; in one corner, a table, lighted by an oil lamp, at which CHARLES A. DANA sits writing or sorting papers.*

*The room is crowded with persons, mostly men, standing in little groups, watching an open door, left, and growing silent whenever anyone enters. But they tend to be silent at all times, like statues; when one of them speaks, few pay attention to him, as if he were not heard; they are stunned, waiting for news from across the hall. Cries and shouts from the street punctuate the silence periodically, rising or falling in violence for no reason known within this room; a shuffle of feet is frequently heard outside.*

*Occasionally two unidentified men (called ANONYMOUS 1, 2) address each other in the room; though it is more accurate*

*to say that each in turn speaks as in a trance, unheard either by the other or by the rest of the inhabitants. If the other responds, it is not in the ordinary way of conversation. The scene begins in that manner, with a strong light on the speaker, and throughout the scene on each speaker in turn.*

*There are two women in the room: MRS. LINCOLN, who sits weeping in a chair, attended by JOSHUA SPEED, who stands at her side, and MISS CLARA HARRIS.*

*The murmur of the crowd rises in the street outside. Sobs, curses, questions: "Is he dead?" "Is the President dead?" "God bless him, he is still alive." Then it subsides*

ANONYMOUS 1:

The crowd will never cease. Nine endless hours,  
And still it moans as if it were one person  
Stretched out upon the dark street, its death bed.

ANONYMOUS 2:

And yet it cannot die, as he will soon.  
Listen! Do you hear the doctors now?  
They only whisper. Does it mean the end?

ANONYMOUS 1:

No, or *she* would rise.

MARY LINCOLN *sits in her chair looking straight ahead*

MISS HARRIS:

Dear Mrs. Lincoln——

*Adjusts the shawl of the older woman*

MARY LINCOLN:

Quiet!

*Tries to smile*

Oh, forgive me, but look there!

They are so very still.

SPEED:

*Leaning over her*

We can be patient

If they are—and if *he* is.

MARY LINCOLN:

He was so patient

Always. There was a stillness in his soul—

Oh, God, let me not break it, crying out!

*Puts her handkerchief to her mouth*

SUMNER *comes through the door, wiping his eyes, and approaches Mary Lincoln's chair*

SUMNER:

Madam, Mr. Stanton sends you word

*SHE stiffens, but HE goes quickly on*

That he regrets his having to forbid

Your presence in that room, and begs your pardon

For the brusque way he did it.

MARY LINCOLN:

I am so used

To him and his apologies. No matter.

*Mister Sumner, what are the doctors saying?*

SUMNER:

Nothing that I could hear.

*Turns and looks back through the door*

But see now, Madam,  
They are dispersed again, they stand at their stations.

MARY LINCOLN:

Oh, and he breathes so hard!

*SUMNER goes past her to the center of the room, where JUDGE DAVIS, separating himself from a dimly lighted group, joins him. SPEED is the only other person who is aware that they are together; he watches them intently, waiting to hear them speak; but first the noise of the crowd, rising and subsiding, fills the room; and next the two ANONYMOUS GENTLEMEN resume their colloquy*

ANONYMOUS 1:

The playhouse where he sat, unseen by most,  
And rocked in his chair, and smiled, will never again  
Be lighted.

ANONYMOUS 2:

Every entrance, every exit  
Will be sealed over by some harmless spider  
Whose curtain never opens, never closes.

ANONYMOUS 1:

And meanwhile the assassin rides away—  
Where?—with screams of people in his ears:  
A terrible music, that his soul enjoys.

ANONYMOUS 2:

Or shudders at—who knows?

ANONYMOUS 1:

His twisted soul  
Rejoices; he could not repent so soon.

ANONYMOUS 2:

Then he is ice. Or wire.

*The light moves to SUMNER and DAVIS, who have been conversing before we hear them*

DAVIS:

Is there more news  
Of the madman?

SUMNER:

*Shakes his head*

Do you call him mad, this player?

DAVIS:

Nothing more meaningless was ever done.

SUMNER:

And so you call it meaningless—you too,  
Whom justice should concern. He was a knowing  
Agent. We shall see, sir, who in the South  
Employed him. What more happy end for them  
Than that a Booth, with tragedy his training,  
Should fire this shot so publicly—so planned

That a full theater might echo with it?  
What more brazen than to cast defeat  
Back on our greatest person?

DAVIS:

Was he, then?

SUMNER:

You know I knew it. So I ask for vengeance  
Twice bloodier than theirs.

DAVIS:

He will not live?

SUMNER:

No hope of it, they say. His last heartbeat  
Is only some minutes off.

DAVIS:

We should consider  
How slow he would have been, had you been murdered,  
Or any other of the great among us,  
How slow to think of it as more than madness,  
Not to be cured except as peace will cure it.

SUMNER:

Peace! There is no certainty of that;  
Nor was there while he lived and watched this play  
Tonight—and laughed, they tell me, at the English  
Clown. For all I loved him, he was surrendering  
More than he had won. And don't forget



That Seward was beaten down, at the same hour,  
In his own bed, by a second of these assassins.

DAVIS:

But Seward will survive.

SUMNER:

And what of that?  
Conspiracy that blunders still confesses  
The murder in its mind—in this foul case,  
Of a whole nation, at its very heart.

*The noises from the street increase, but there are no intelligible words. The TALKERS listen, pause, and resume*

DAVIS:

And yet we should consider, as I know  
He would, if even then it wasn't madness—  
Multiple, I grant, but still so void  
Of meaning——

SUMNER:

Why do you keep on saying that?

DAVIS:

You say it, Senator, yourself. He had  
Surrendered. Well! What Southerner in his senses  
Would have removed the one man among us  
He could most count on to remain his friend  
Through thick, through thin of counsel? Seward either—  
He is not bloody-minded. Why should they blink  
At you and Wade and Chandler, Stevens and Julian—  
Those were the ones to kill, if I may say so.

SUMNER:

I don't assume intelligence in monsters.  
They aimed at whom they saw. Had Grant been there—  
Had he not changed his mind and gone to join  
His wife, his children—Grant would have died, we know,  
In the same box, at the same comedy.

DAVIS:

But Grant!  
A multiple blunder, truly. They were the same  
In charity as they were in stubborn will.

SUMNER:

I don't assume, I say, intelligence  
In devils. The effect of what was done  
I see, however, as more terrible  
Than you do.

DAVIS:

No. It never will be measured,  
The horror of it. If you think me cold,  
You are fantastically in error. Once,  
In Illinois, I watched him with a woman  
Whose son he had defended—a poor woman,  
And she would have kissed his knees; but Lincoln made her  
Laugh. I watched them both, and they were like  
One woman; for he had that in him too,  
No matter what the power in thigh and shoulder—  
You must have noticed, when they had him naked,  
How giantlike he lay crisscross the bed.  
And Wilkes Booth ended this.

*A stir at the door*

There—do you think——

*But it is STANTON stamping through to the corner table where  
DANA sits with paper and pencil*

SUMNER:

No, it is nothing. Stanton has remembered  
One thing more to do. He is in charge  
Of all of us this hour. And every hour.

*SPEED leans over MARY LINCOLN, whispering to her. She seems  
not to listen; then she does, and suddenly cries out*

MARY LINCOLN:

Joshua, you make my heart remember——

SPEED:

Too much? Oh, no. For now is the right time,  
Mary, to remember.

MARY LINCOLN:

What, for instance?  
Of twenty thousand things, what, for instance?

SPEED:

Well——

MARY LINCOLN:

The good I did him, or the bad?

SPEED:

Oh, certainly, the good. What else?

MARY LINCOLN:

*You know,*  
Joshua. You saw and heard.

SPEED:

Remember,  
Mary, as I do, the young man there  
In Springfield.

MARY LINCOLN:

*Covers her face*

No, Joshua. Too sweet.  
Don't break my heart again.

SPEED:

But it might heal  
The quicker. That's my guess—I am no doctor;  
Only his oldest friend—and could be wrong.

MARY LINCOLN:

Oldest and best, Joshua.

SPEED:

I hope so.  
Otherwise I meddled here these last  
Few weeks. I never let him out of sight.  
As if I knew——

MARY LINCOLN:

Or *he* did. He *knew*,  
Joshua, he *knew*.

SPEED:

*Looks down at her thoughtfully*

I tell you, Mary,

It was the last thing he knew. The days to come—  
Those filled his mind. Not me, not even you,  
But time to come filled him to overflowing.  
I saw it when he smiled; or when he sighed,  
Foreseeing difficulties. Even then  
The future seemed his friend. And ours. And theirs—  
Those who had been his enemies. Oh, Mary,  
The madness of this thing! The utter failure  
Of two halves to join: his mind and theirs.  
I knew his mind, he told it to me plain.  
But theirs—oh, had it waited! Not that I think  
The madman Booth was *sent*. He brought himself,  
Then took himself away. A single dream,  
A splinter of wild lightning. Had Booth been  
Where I was, these weeks! And saw and heard  
The confidence, the love; and known the fear  
That words might fail at last—and so they did,  
Since our own people scorned them.

MARY LINCOLN:

*Suddenly looks up*

Words? Failed?

*His* never did. He was the master of them.

SPEED:

I know. The fault was ours—his own people,  
There on the White House lawn. They wanted brimstone—  
Madness—and he merely broached a law.  
His last words were quiet, as if peace  
Already ruled: co-President with him.

MARY LINCOLN:

But *scorn*, you say.

SPEED:

The people *could* not listen.  
They had left intellect at home.

MARY LINCOLN:

*SHE has ceased to take in what HE is saying*

Will God  
Forgive all those who could have helped and didn't?  
*I* could have helped him more. Instead—well,  
*You* saw, *you* heard.

SPEED:

I only hear the crowd.

*The murmur outside swells and deepens*

It is the one sound that lives; as when he talked,  
That was the one sound by which *I* lived.  
I came a thousand miles to hear him say:  
“Think of it, Joshua! The United States!”  
And then last night. And now. The United States  
Is all one voice, one moan. And I know why.  
I think I know it best, for I was here  
That day.

MARY LINCOLN:

What day?

SPEED:

When he was sailing South,  
Remember, to see Grant. He wouldn't take me  
With him, but I went in my own fashion.  
He couldn't lose me, Mary. For those weeks  
I lived with him, and listened. I still do. . . .

*Covers his face with both hands as the stage darkens and all  
the figures on it disappear*

*Curtain*





## Scene Two

*The President's Office, the White House, March 23, 1865.*

JOHN HAY, *the President's secretary*, and WILLIAM STODDARD, *assistant secretary*, are laying out letters on the desk while EZRA, *a Negro with gray hair*, dusts under the chairs and rubs the hanging lamps.

HAY:

We should have spared him all of these. The Tycoon, William, is tired.

STODDARD:

The Tycoon. How is that?

HAY:

Oh, my old name for him—not to his face.  
Japan was in our minds that month. Tycoon  
Is Japanese for Caesar, if you will.

STODDARD:

Beware the Ides of March.

HAY:

*Looks at calendar*

Well, that's gone by.  
He's safe another year.

STODDARD:

You think he is?

HAY:

Certainly, with Lamon all about.  
Lamon's religion is to guard his friend:  
His partner once in Danville, Illinois.  
But now that he is Marshal of this District,  
He's self-appointed keeper of the king—  
He seems to think him that. Sometimes it's laughable.  
You should have seen him last Election Night.  
Nobody told him to; it wasn't needed;  
But he lay down in front of the locked door  
Behind which, we hoped, the President slept,  
And kept himself awake till the sun rose  
By feeling the handles of two knives he wore  
And fingering the triggers of three pistols—  
And a short shotgun, too, for ample measure.  
We've called him,

*Nodding toward the door*

by the way, a thousand names—  
Not to his face. "Backwoods Jupiter" was one.

STODDARD:

Nice names, compared with "baboon" and "gorilla."

HAY:

Yes, he has drawn them all, including this one:

*Strikes a letter with the back of his hand*

"Tyrant." Could be "despot," or "dictator"—  
Those are the commonest. I'm glad he's going.  
The rest, as Grant said, will be good for him.

STODDARD:

What do you think it's for—beyond a rest?

HAY:

Shh! Here he comes. Ezra, you get out.

*EZRA hurries to stand by the door, which starts to open. As it opens, enter JOSHUA SPEED under the arm of LINCOLN, who holds it for him and follows him through*

LINCOLN:

What's this, John? Don't shoo Ezra out before I can pay him my respects. Good morning, Ezra.

EZRA:

Morning, Mr. Presidency.

*Bows and goes out, closing the door behind him*

LINCOLN:

*While he walks to the desk, picks up the top letter, reads it, and puts it down*

There, Joshua, did you hear what he said? Ezra knows I don't like the sound of "Your Excellency"—only a few ambassadors use

it any more—but he considers “Mr. President” too plain. If he only knew, I don’t like even that. Good morning, John. Good morning, Stoddard—are you up to date now on what Nicolay does around here? I hope he is enjoying his sea trip.

STODDARD:

He is, sir. We have had a letter from him.  
His duties—well, I’ve watched him night and day.

LINCOLN:

*Nodding*

Of course you have. Both of you

*Including HAY with a sweep of his hand*

know this man—my oldest friend, nearly. Joshua Speed, just in from Louisville.

*THEY bow to SPEED, who smiles acknowledgment*

You know him by hearsay if nothing else—my own hearsay, Joshua; I confess I talk about you a good deal. But don’t worry, it’s never anything bad; or if it is, these young gentlemen won’t tell you. They were born, you know, about the time I met you in Springfield—a stranger from New Salem, and you took me in. John here was only three when you moved back to Kentucky, where so many of us came from. Well, all of us in this room were Illinois men once; and one of us still is. John, do I have to see anybody this morning?

HAY:

Nobody, sir, I think. But I can’t promise;  
There may be forcible entries; there *have* been.

LINCOLN:

I know. But let us hope the guerrilla bands are quiet till noon. Then you will have it easy.

HAY:

More or less, sir.

*Smiles*

Shall we leave you now?

LINCOLN:

Yes,

*Inclines his head toward SPEED*

in the safest hands.

*As the SECRETARIES start out*

Oh, and as to *quiet*—see how it is, John, along the Potomac. Also, the Chesapeake and the James. Mrs. Lincoln and I are not the best of sailors. Joshua, I'll explain this in a minute.

*The SECRETARIES go out*

SPEED:

You're going away?

LINCOLN *nods and seems about to speak, but does not*

I gather not till noon, though.

*Hesitates*

What *would* you have us call you? Fanny asked,  
And I was ignorant. I never know.  
It seems a long time since I called you "Lincoln."

LINCOLN:

I called you "Speed," didn't I? Well, do you mind "Joshua"?

SPEED:

Oh, no, but——

LINCOLN:

Don't worry. I'll be "Lincoln" if you like. And how *was* Fanny? How's Kentucky?

SPEED:

She sends all her love.

LINCOLN:

And *it* sends half. I know. "A house divided cannot stand"—and yet it stands. I was a poor prophet, Joshua, if I meant Kentucky when I said that—the prettiest room in the present house.

SPEED:

The old State is weary, Lincoln, weary.  
The war goes on so long. I wouldn't say,  
As some do, you could stop it; but I wish——

LINCOLN:

I wish I could ever sleep. I wish my hands and feet, the ends of me out there,

*Stretches his arms, looks down at the floor*

could ever get warm again. Here it is morning, Joshua, and I'm not rested.

*Sits in armchair and puts his feet on the desk*

And *they're* stone cold.

*Points to his feet*

Do you remember when we slept over the store in Springfield? Bad as the bed was, it was goose-down to what I lie on here—pieces of my own mind; and yours; and millions more.

SPEED:

You never *go* to bed. You never did.

LINCOLN:

We stayed up talking. I remember how that was. But every morning was a new day, and we were *rested*. Now I don't even know where the tired spot is. Or rather, I do know. It's everywhere. The last Cabinet meeting had to be held—would you believe it?—in my bedroom, with me in bed, and not altogether upright, either. The Secretary of the Navy looked impressive from that angle, with his white beard, twice as long and broad as mine, rising and falling over the waves. I wasn't sick, you know. Just tired.

*Smiles wanly*

SPEED:

I often think of this. I say to Fanny——

LINCOLN:

Stop, Joshua. I'm ashamed. Old women with a misery will talk of nothing else. I haven't told you how good you were to come, and how good Fanny was to let you. Have you seen Mary?

SPEED:

No. I asked, but she was busy packing.  
A holiday for both? She needs it too.

LINCOLN:

Worse than I do, Joshua. She is the opposite of tired: she doesn't *want* to rest, and couldn't if she tried.

*Pauses, looks at SPEED again as if he would say something.  
SPEED waits, then breaks the silence*

SPEED:

As hard for her to be here as for you.  
You used to say she was ambitious. Well——

LINCOLN:

She was, for both of us. But then I was too; you must remember that. She could imagine us here, though, before I could. Yet nobody could have imagined how much this war would add to the experience—or take away. I still can't talk easily about Willie's death.

*He stops abruptly. SPEED refrains from speaking*

One boy lost in Springfield, and one here: half of them gone, Joshua. But you know this; and of course you know how many of Mary's own family—her brothers, her half brothers, Ben Helm—fought on the other side. You may *not* know that she has been thought disloyal, and called so, because of that.

SPEED:

Only in Washington could such things be.

LINCOLN:

Only in Washington? No, in plenty of places. But here is where she heard, one after another, that three of them had died. And she couldn't mourn them—not fully; for that is Mary's nature.



SPEED:

We know. It has been terrible for her.

LINCOLN:

Life for a woman here is terrible at best; the abuse, the ridicule—how could they be deserved? And they can't be explained, except by theories about the people that you know I don't have. People must do this if they will. We pay a high price, Joshua, but not too high, for government by them. And of course they include a Massachusetts lady who wrote me on March 4th that unseen bells rang in her neighborhood because the people there were glad I was to be President again. She said I should have heard those bells. Well, I still do, between—there, such noises as that.

*Nods toward the door*

Do you know who'll be here in a minute?

SPEED:

I only heard someone say "Senator."

LINCOLN:

A sinister word sometimes—depending on the Senator. This is Ben Wade. You stay.

SPEED:

Wouldn't you rather——

LINCOLN:

No, I wouldn't. I know *your* preferences. They are entirely natural. But sacrifice them, Joshua, please do.

*When the door opens, to the surprise of both men a WOMAN of perhaps forty-five, distraught, her graying hair untidy, rushes in ahead of WADE, while HAY tries vainly to restrain her. LINCOLN gets up slowly; SPEED withdraws to a corner of the room; WADE is visibly impatient*

WOMAN:

Sir! They said I couldn't, but I have,  
I'm here.

*Drops to her knees*

Oh, Mr. President, be good  
To me, be good. Do one small thing I ask——

LINCOLN:

Madam, stand up. Who said you couldn't?

WOMAN:

Why, Mrs. Lincoln.

LINCOLN, *surprised, looks toward the door, which is still open*

But I won't stand up.

LINCOLN:

Then nothing can be done.

WOMAN:

Oh, don't say that!

LINCOLN:

Nothing, till you are taller. Possibly not even then—I can't do everything.

*SHE rises*

There! Now I can hear you better. It was a long way down there.

*HE smiles; WADE frowns; SHE laughs hysterically*

WOMAN:

I'm not really laughing, Mr. President.  
Forgive me, I'm not laughing. It's a long way,  
Too, to where my last boy is. My third.  
The oldest—he was killed at Chickamauga;  
He was with Thomas on the awful hill.  
I had got used to that when Wilderness fires,  
In the dead leaves there—they told me—tortured  
the second.

He cried in the night, on the ground, and nobody helped him;  
Nobody knew him after, except by the picture  
He always carried, of me and his father. And now  
Jamie, the last one, lies down there on a sickbed—  
Fredericksburg, it is—too weak to be moved.  
Oh, and he may be dying. *Can't* I go down now,  
Sir, and give him some things he needs, and take him  
Away as soon as they let me? All the way home?

LINCOLN:

You mean, Madam, take him out of the army? You want the boy  
discharged? One of Grant's men?

WOMAN:

The Butcher!

LINCOLN:

Now, now! General Grant is my friend. And yours, too, if you  
understood.

WOMAN:

Not mine he isn't—never!

*Suddenly looks at LINCOLN, as if appalled by what she sees*

Or you either.

Butchers, butchers, both of you! You too!

Why should he take so long to win the war—

He hasn't, even yet—and why should you, sir,

Never have lifted a finger to make peace?

Both of you wanted to keep on being big—

That's why it is, they say. Now I believe them.

*She turns and rushes into the arms of MARY LINCOLN, who has come in through the open door and for the moment is unaware of SPEED and WADE*

MARY LINCOLN:

There, now. I *told* you it would do no good,

To you or to him *either*.

*Looks anxiously over the woman's head at LINCOLN*

Or to *me*—

Even to *me*. I have lost more than you—

More, sometimes, I feel, than anybody.

*Gently, with no further note of scolding*

Come, though. You've said it now, and maybe done

Yourself *some* good. Come, dear.

*Looks up and sees SPEED, who starts toward her with his hands outstretched*

Joshua, Joshua!

So you *did* come!

*Stops him with a motion of her head*

And later we must talk  
Of Fanny and everybody. But not now—  
You see, not *now*.

*Stares, then puts a hand to her forehead*

Oh! But we're going away.  
You'll have to come too, Joshua.

*Does not see LINCOLN shake his head*

Now, my dear!

*Goes out with her arm around the woman; and LINCOLN,  
absorbed in the sight, follows her*

WADE:

Fool of a woman!

*Notices SPEED*

He shouldn't bother with her.  
Democrat! Make peace! But don't I know you?  
I'm Wade, of Ohio.

SPEED:

Joshua Speed, of Kentucky.

WADE:

That's it, then. Brother of James, in the Cabinet.

SPEED:

An old friend of the President; no more.  
I haven't any business.

WADE:

Well, I have.

I wish he would come back. He's out there now,  
Probably, making her feel a little better.  
A waste of public time—but an old story,  
Like this one that we hear of Mrs. Lincoln.

SPEED:

*Suddenly more attentive*

And what is that?

WADE:

Why, that she's mad. Or someday  
Will be, if he doesn't hold her in.

SPEED:

*Shocked*

Only in Washington could they say this.

WADE:

*Not listening*

Did you have slaves down there? Do the Border States  
Still think it was a war about the Union?  
A nice, McClellan war, with officers prancing?  
It was a new war when some of us took hold.  
Kentucky—is it up to date on that?

SPEED:

On what, exactly? I was saying to *him*  
It's an old war for us. On both sides, too.

WADE:

Both sides of nothing. There's but one side now,  
On to the end—and we know what that is.

SPEED:

Yes, I suppose you do; or think you do.

WADE:

We're acting, we're not thinking. Right to the finish,  
Acting!

LINCOLN *returns*

Mr. President, at last!

LINCOLN:

*To SPEED, as if WADE were not there*

She's going now to Stanton with one of those little cards I sign when I don't know what to do—which is pretty often. You have seen a fair sample, Joshua, of what I call abuse. I am more used to it, you see, than Mary is. I hope *you* didn't mind too much. In case you did, let me warn you: it will happen again if you stay with me as long as I hope you will.

*SPEED lifts a hand, then slowly lowers it*

If she gets through the lines—and possibly she won't—the whole thing may be over, and her boy mustered out, before she finds him. I hope she finds him anyway. Senator, good morning. Didn't they tell you I was going away?

WADE:

The secretaries? But I knew already.  
You're going to visit Grant at City Point.

LINCOLN:

*To SPEED*

You see, Joshua? I have no secrets from a Senator. You didn't know it yourself, did you? Neither did I when I wrote you to come. And now I'm sailing off at noon, with Tad and Mary. I'm sorry, Joshua. We must make it up when I am back. But we still have the morning. That is——

WADE:

I know, Your Excellency, I must be quick.  
Well, Sumner and I—he sent you his compliments—

LINCOLN *bows awkwardly*

Are worried. So is Chandler, and Winter Davis.

LINCOLN:

Of course. If one, then all. You worry in a pack. But what's the matter now? I'm going to be out of the way a week or so—I expected you to rejoice.

WADE:

You're going to Grant. Well, may I inquire——

LINCOLN:

Certainly. He telegraphed me—said the rest might do me good.

WADE:

Rest? You never rest. I *will* say that.  
No, that's not all of it, we're mortal certain.  
We think Grant doesn't know what he's to do  
When Lee gives up. He has to have you tell him.



LINCOLN:

And I have to have *you* tell *me*. Is that it, Senator?

WADE:

Only this much. One error could be fatal:  
The line of leniency must not be crossed.  
You know our sentiments, and so does Grant.  
He'd better not play baby when they meet.

LINCOLN:

A butcher and a baby. Can the man be both? Now, Senator, you speak of sentiments. I didn't know you had them. I have none myself. Are you aware of that? If I have feelings, they're my private business; I've never inflicted them on the country. But the country does know what I *think*. From time to time I tell it, in the best way I know; and in the best way it knows it listens.

WADE:

*Sarcastically intoning*

"With malice toward none, with charity for all."

LINCOLN:

Verbatim—thank you. By the way, was that a sentiment?

WADE:

What else? People think so. Some of them cry.

LINCOLN:

It was hard sense to me, and it still is. Hard to put in practice, too. You'll see.

WADE:

Harder not to make the fatal error.

LINCOLN:

As the old woman told the Crawford girl back in Gentryville, Indiana, when I was a boy. They didn't know I was there. I was standing by Jones's store as they came out; the old woman may have thought I was too young to understand. The hardest thing not to do, she said, is the first thing. So innocent—just being friends—just letting him—you know——

WADE:

Mr. Lincoln! Are you ever serious?

LINCOLN:

I've never been more serious than I am this morning.

*Smiles good-naturedly*

WADE:

Doubtless you never were; and to our loss.

LINCOLN:

You remind me, Senator——

WADE:

Please, Your Excellency: no more diversions.

LINCOLN:

But you do remind me—how can I help it?—of your colleague (let him be nameless) who one day, being in his cups—solemnly

so—pointed a long finger at every man he met and demanded of him, in a voice as deep as Daniel Webster's: "Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" He came in here, unannounced, and put it to me—perhaps in derision, because I like that poem. Well, Seward was on hand, and he made the appropriate remark, as he usually does. Looking down at your colleague, who had collapsed into

*Pointing*

this very chair, he said, rather sadly: "I see no reason whatever."

WADE:

*Starting out*

Good day! I might have known you wouldn't listen.

LINCOLN:

*His voice rising in pitch*

But I have listened—today, and every other day since God in His infinite mercy knows when. Since I left Springfield. Since Bull Run. Since God in His infinite wisdom let it come about that there should be a Committee on the Conduct of the War, with you as chairman.

WADE *lowers his head, but says nothing*

Since I learned, as I slowly did, that in spite of all your blunders—for you pampered every bad general, and persecuted every good one—

WADE *tosses his head*

I couldn't win the war without you. I mean all of you, in the Senate or wherever you are. I don't say Jacobins, as some do, but if I say Radicals I mean a machine that tears up living trees and

men and cities by the root, the deep root where all the life is, and the future leaves. I couldn't restore the Republic without your help and strength—and without your fanaticism, thanks to which this did become at last a remorseless, revolutionary struggle. I had hoped it could be otherwise. I had hoped the States——

WADE:

Be careful, Mr. President: This Congress  
Never will let you reconstruct the States.

LINCOLN:

I haven't said I wanted to. I'd rather they did it by themselves. That's all I meant by pocketing your Reconstruction Bill. You and Winter Davis accused me in your Manifesto—which I didn't read—of usurping authority; of nursing along the little State governments I had encouraged to exist in Louisiana, in Arkansas, in Tennessee, because last fall I needed their electoral votes. I nursed those puny commonwealths so that someday the people under them might rule themselves again. If they are never to do that, then there has been no sense in this war, and those are right who say we are Republicans in name only. You and your friends want wholesale hangings, I believe; you want to confiscate the South into a desert; you would have no States down there at all, but conquered provinces under military management. You would disenfranchise right and left. You would disqualify every intelligent white Southerner, repentant or unrepentant, from holding office. You will not trust the South, now that slavery is gone, to solve the problem of its homeless Negroes.

WADE:

*Sharply*

Do *you*, Mr. Lincoln, trust it to do that?

LINCOLN:

*Slowly*

As far, Senator, as I can trust anything or anybody. As I grow older, I confess that isn't very far. But with such a reservation, yes. We shall impose the principles—the war in fact has done so, along with the slavery Amendment—and those people down there will have to hammer out the practice. We can't do both, I think, if peace is what we want.

WADE:

"We," you say. Why, *we* can do anything.

LINCOLN:

Oh, no, we can't. Not in the long run, Senator, if we subvert self-government anywhere. To the extent that we do that, we shall be digging the grave of our own authority. But now

*As if coming to*

there *is* the authority of Congress to recognize or not, just as it chooses, the representatives of homecoming States. So I'll be careful, Mr. Wade, because of this. I can't afford to make you mad. Not fighting mad. I don't want to anyway, because—you won't believe this—I love your good opinion.

WADE:

*Bitterly*

You can't afford to do a single thing  
That we don't think is what the country needs.

LINCOLN:

*Sharply, again*

Or what *you* need, for power? Isn't it queer, Joshua, how powerful I am said to be; some people shudder at it; yet look! Congress is aiming to be President in place of me, and probably succeeding. If you don't mind my saying so, Kentucky is to blame for this, Kentucky and the other Border States. There was a time when the last, best hope of earth was in their hands. With their consent we could have *bought* the slaves—I mean, Senator, that Congress could.

*The rest of the speech is to WADE*

Congress could have paid for them with much less money than the war has cost, and of course less blood (that woman's sons, for instance, and my wife's brothers), not to say less hatred that may never heal. But no, the war had to go on; and it could do so only in the name of forcible Emancipation. Which drove the bitterness down to the root—where, as I said in the Inaugural you were kind enough to quote, perhaps it had to go, for all our sins on both sides.

WADE:

Both sides! I'm sick of hearing that. Be soft  
And you'll be sorry. At City Point, remember,  
You will unmake or make yourself for good.

LINCOLN:

You flatter me. I have never thought of myself as my own Maker, nor do I now. As for City Point, please believe I go there for what Grant offers me, a little change and rest. Beyond that I shall do nothing softer than reality permits. Reality is my guide in time of darkness. Yours too, no doubt. The only question is——

WADE:

Good day, Mr. President.

*Really going at last*

I'll say to Sumner——

LINCOLN:

Oh! Tell Sumner I am sorry he couldn't accept Mrs. Lincoln's invitation to go with us. Tell him, please, to come down later if he can.

*To SPEED*

Sumner thinks he runs me, and perhaps he does—through Mary. She likes him as I do. She especially likes his clothes, and his fine manners when he rides out with us. I told her he made her feel like a duchess; she didn't deny it.

*To WADE again*

Senator——

WADE:

*At the door*

Yes?

LINCOLN:

No hard feelings. I've none for you, no matter how I sound. Hard feelings, soft feelings—I have neither, if you want to know. The darkness is too deep for that.

*Waves both hands outward, in front of his eyes, as if he were swimming*

*WADE goes out, slamming the door*

There, Joshua!

SPEED:

There indeed. But Lincoln, you deceived him.

LINCOLN:

What? You too?

SPEED:

Your intentions, I suspect, are fully formed.  
You know what you will say at City Point.

LINCOLN *shakes his head, but listens carefully*

Grant, you must assume, is winding up  
His long siege of Petersburg, where Lee is.  
When Petersburg surrenders, Richmond will;  
And then when Richmond does it is the end,  
The end that we have prayed for. Yet we wonder,  
As you do, what is hidden in that end;  
What pain, of course, but afterward what rage,  
What possible combustion—the old fire  
Not finished. So you know what care is called for,  
What loving care, lest it burn on forever.  
I think you know the words you are taking with you.

LINCOLN:

I wish I did, Joshua. But honestly, I have to go there first. Then I have to sit down with Grant—for the first time, mind you, to talk about what happens when a *civil* war is over. Grant and I have never discussed such matters; I think I know him pretty well, but this time I won't know anything until I hear him speak—or watch him when he doesn't, which is fairly often—and until I listen to myself. I'm like the old lady who wasn't being consulted in a family conference; somebody eventually asked for her opin-



ion, and she snapped out: "How can I tell what I think till I hear what I say?" You do know certain things, of course, about the way I want the country to bind up its wounds. You want this too, and so do many others. But the initial treatment, the very first move—what should that be? Something quite simple, I believe, and purely military; nothing political yet, and nothing moral. The politics and the morals are there—God knows that better than we do—but rather than Wade's I would have none at all for the present. So this first move will have to be made by a soldier, and I am not a soldier. Therefore I must sit down with Grant—and, I hope, with Sherman. But that's risky; Sherman has Joe Johnston where he wants him, in North Carolina, with no place to run, and I suppose he ought to keep him there. Johnston's the little fox, Lee's the big one. Day and night, both have to be watched—Lee above all, lest he slip out of Petersburg and take to the woods in western Virginia, and finally work down to join what is left of his army with what is left of Johnston's. The two foxes could then become a tiger—an old, tired tiger, but dangerous enough to keep the war going another year.

SPEED:

What kind of animal just left this room?

LINCOLN:

*Tempted to oblige, but refraining*

Let us not judge him, Joshua, or else we shall have to judge some others; and finally ourselves.

SPEED:

When do you leave? Didn't you say at noon?

LINCOLN:

*Walking over and standing in front of the clock*

That's right. Stanton's orders are to be at the wharf an hour and a half from now. I can't disobey Stanton. He's a great man, even if he does know it. These four years—

*Sighs*

they couldn't have passed without him. I wish you were going with us, Joshua. Mary even thinks you are—I told her no, but she didn't take it in. Of course she was occupied. She was kind to that woman, wasn't she?

*Looks closely at SPEED*

SPEED:

Mary was wonderful. But then she would be.

LINCOLN:

Would be, would be.

*Musing*

Yes, she was wonderfully kind.

*More briskly*

Well, both of us will miss you down at City Point.

SPEED:

I haven't got a better thing to do,  
Now that I'm here, than tag along—that is——

LINCOLN:

But I can't even ask you. The *River Queen* has passengers enough. Also, you know too much; or think you do. What would Wade say if you went? Not that that matters—too much—but I mustn't deceive even myself.

SPEED:

I wouldn't say a word or think a thought.

LINCOLN:

No, you stay here—or go home to Fanny—and if you *must* think, let it be about that woman and her sons. And after her, about some southern woman and *her* sons. Both, I suppose, have reason to wish me dead. Yet they are not my true enemies as I understand the term. One of those is the South, the whole South, that *thinks* I am not its friend. The other is the North—not the whole North, but Wade's part—because it *knows* I am. Good-by, Joshua.

*Goes to him and shakes his hand*

SPEED:

Good-by—

*Hesitating*

—Abe.

*Curtain*



## Scene Three

*Before Grant's Headquarters, City Point, Virginia, March 25th. A fire is burning in front of the hut. Trees right and left. Masts and funnels visible in background. Three kittens are playing between the fire and the base of a tree. The kittens are gray.*

*As the curtain rises LINCOLN and ADMIRAL PORTER are sitting by the fire. One soldier (A CORPORAL) is standing at attention by the entrance to the hut; another (A PRIVATE) stands at the extreme left; a third (A PRIVATE) stands at the extreme right, guarding the entrance to the area.*

LINCOLN:

Admiral, do you suppose I would be interfering with discipline if I talked to one of these men?

*Makes no attempt to lower his voice. All THREE SOLDIERS hear him, but keep their poses*

PORTER:

Not being their commander, Mr. President—  
Being, that is to say, only an old salt

Fresh up from Wilmington, I hesitate.  
Yet since the General is gone so long  
In search of his good wife, my poor opinion  
Is that you may, and no harm will be done.

*The pomposity of this is partly for the benefit of the soldiers,  
to impress or amuse them, and partly natural to PORTER*

LINCOLN:

So. But if Grant scolds me, I'll hold you materially responsible.  
Corporal—

*The CORPORAL presents arms*

—please don't do that.

PORTER:

*To CORPORAL*

The Commander in Chief means you are at your ease.

*The CORPORAL nervously relaxes*

LINCOLN:

Corporal, I've been wondering about those gray kittens. Are they  
Confederates?

CORPORAL:

No, sir—I mean, I don't know, sir.

LINCOLN:

I suppose it would be hard to tell. Will you bring one of them  
to me?

CORPORAL:

Yes, sir.

*Goes over and picks up the nearest kitten, and takes it across stage to LINCOLN, who puts it in his lap and starts petting it*

LINCOLN:

And now the others, if you don't mind. If you do mind, the other men can bring them.

CORPORAL:

*Looking toward the TWO PRIVATES in such a way as to suggest that they must keep their places*

Oh, no, sir. I will.

*Brings them both at once*

LINCOLN:

Now, there. Thank you, Corporal.

*CORPORAL returns to his post*

Is their mother anywhere around?

CORPORAL:

We think she was killed, sir.

LINCOLN:

I was afraid of that. They act like orphans. Does anybody feed them?

CORPORAL:

I think so, sir.

LINCOLN:

Somebody should—milk, if nothing else. Will you see that they get plenty of it?

CORPORAL:

*Rather uncertainly*

Yes, sir.

LINCOLN:

Admiral, I believe they *are* Confederates. Does this mean I should hang them?

PORTER:

It could, but I suspect you never will.

LINCOLN:

Why not?

*Playing with one he has turned on its back*

Their claws are sharp.

PORTER:

They could be clipped, and then no one need worry—  
Not now, at least. Of course they would grow again.

LINCOLN:

So I should hang them? You say I never will. There might be others, though, waiting to do it while my back was turned—or thinking how to shame me for not doing it myself. I wonder how much chance these kittens have. Let's see—three—nine—twenty-seven lives all told. A lot of danger there.



*Continues stroking them throughout*

PORTER:

They give you pleasure, sir, just as they are.  
I think if I were you I would consider them  
Merely as kittens, with no politics.

LINCOLN:

And better for it. You know, Admiral, I have never been anything  
but a politician. Sometimes I can envy those who are more than  
that—or as these are, less.

PORTER:

We all know what a cross it is for you.

LINCOLN:

Against the grain, you mean?

PORTER:

Oh, no, sir. It is natural to you;  
It is your genius; but these terrible times  
Add burden upon burden not to be borne.

LINCOLN:

*As if to himself*

If natural, then bearable.

*Then to PORTER*

No, Admiral, perhaps I should have been something else entirely.  
Some other man then would be doing easily, and doubtless very  
well, what I do—why, you may not know with what ridiculous

difficulty I do anything at all. Some days, and certainly some nights when I am trying to sleep, it seems, to say the best of it, a most undignified performance. Not merely an actor in the wrong role, but a man who should never have been an actor.

PORTER:

We have our own opinions, sir, of this.  
We think you play the greatest part, and perfectly.

LINCOLN *shakes his head, if only to suggest that PORTER doesn't need to pour it on so thick*

But please remember that my ship, the *Malvern*,  
Is always ready as a place of refuge  
When cares and men threaten to overwhelm you.

LINCOLN:

Even Cabinet members? Now, Admiral, could *they* be kept away?

PORTER:

A simple thing. Your wish would be my orders  
To an obedient crew. Dropping downstream,  
We'd anchor in the middle of the James  
And pipe no man aboard that lives and breathes.  
If, as I hear, your party must return  
And you be left alone, remember the *Malvern*.

LINCOLN:

Tomorrow or the next day, or someday soon, Mrs. Lincoln and the others *will* have to go; that's true. Then, Admiral—well, we shall see; I can't say now, but thank you. Meanwhile the *River Queen* is comfortable, and Captain Barnes is good to us.

*Slaps his thigh*

To keep them all off for a day or two—why, what a great thing water is! Only one man could come whenever he liked.

PORTER:

*Thinking of himself*

And who may that be, Mr. President?

LINCOLN:

*The CORPORAL comes to attention as GRANT and MRS. GRANT enter through the door of the hut—SHE first*

This man. Well, General, you found her.

*GRANT lifts a hand almost imperceptibly. MRS. GRANT hurries forward, her hand outstretched, but looking down at the kittens*

MRS. GRANT:

Oh, Mr. Lincoln, I misunderstood;  
I thought you wouldn't want a woman here.  
I thought the two of you had things to say——

LINCOLN:

*Trying to get up with the kittens, but unable to manage it*

We do, I guess. But we can't talk in the presence of these little rebels; and I can't even rise as I should——

MRS. GRANT:

Oh, please stay there. Is Mrs. Lincoln rested?  
Ulysses told me when he came last night  
From meeting you at the boat that she was ill.

LINCOLN:

We both drank some water that disagreed with us. But she's all right. She sends her best to you.

MRS. GRANT:

I should have gone then, but I supposed it  
Better to wait. Please ask her, Mr. President,  
When I may come—I hope, this afternoon.

LINCOLN:

She will be pleased. And I am, Mrs. Grant. But now these small friends of mine—the Corporal brought them, and perhaps he can take them away.

*GRANT signals to the CORPORAL, who comes over and removes the kittens to the base of the tree*

Admiral Porter

*PORTER and MRS. GRANT nod to each other*  
thinks I am more devoted to them than they deserve,

*PORTER smiles and shakes his head*  
and possibly I am.

MRS. GRANT:

My boys play with them—Headquarters pets.  
They will be happy that you did so too.

LINCOLN:

And how *are* those boys of yours? Tad will want to see them; I left him on the boat today.

MRS. GRANT:

Oh, nuisances, and well. But do bring Tad.

LINCOLN:

Good. All of us will see all of you as soon as we can. And now I wonder, Mrs. Grant, if you and the Admiral——

MRS. GRANT:

I understand.

*Going to give her arm to PORTER, and starting off with him in spite of his visible reluctance to miss the conversation*

LINCOLN:

Unless you are afraid of him. I am, a little. You are used to generals, and so am I. But these old salts——

PORTER:

Madam, do I intimidate you?

*Keeps turning to look at the two men*

MRS. GRANT:

Never.

There is a shady walk down to the river.  
I'll name you all the boats, and you correct me.

PORTER:

Never.

*THEY go out, and GRANT and LINCOLN sit in the two chairs, silently awhile. GRANT lights a cigar*

LINCOLN:

The Admiral wanted to stay.

GRANT *nods*

But I think this is better.

GRANT *nods again*

You haven't told me, General, why you asked me to come down.  
Something about the war?

GRANT:

Something about the peace. It will come sooner  
Or later, Mr. President. I must be ready.

LINCOLN:

*Excited and delighted because GRANT has opened the way so soon*

I thought so! I hoped so!

*His excitement subsides, however, at once*

Not that that makes it easy. We have made war together, you and I, but never peace. I can't remember when our language wasn't rather savage. You told me once you had a bulldog grip on Lee; and my advice was to chew and choke as much as possible.

GRANT *chuckles, remembering*

And just a year ago, when we were planning most of what has happened since, I seem to recollect some talk of your holding one hind leg of the enemy—this leg, the Virginia leg—while Sherman skinned the other. Or was it the opposite way around?

GRANT:

*He has ceased to chuckle*

No, it was as you say.

*Pauses before he says, very slowly*

A year ago!

LINCOLN:

Well, that year and this war are nearly over, as *you* say. Both of them did look as if they might last forever. For me, anyway.

GRANT *lifts an arm to signify that he is no exception*

Do you remember Petersburg last summer?

GRANT *waves a hand, distressed*

It could have ended then, almost a year ago. I never knew what went wrong.

GRANT:

It was Cold Harbor. We hadn't recovered yet  
From that, and from the march across the James.

LINCOLN:

As Beauregard was smart enough to know.

GRANT:

Beauregard was clever. And my staff  
Was not. We all confess it, Mr. President.  
This siege—nobody wanted such a thing.

LINCOLN:

*Sighs*

Nobody in the world. What kind of fate, General, has plagued us ever since the Wilderness? You told me, not too long after—

ward, it could have ended even then, except that somebody underestimated Lee's losses the second night.

GRANT:

Somebody, Mr. President? Myself.  
I told you. You pretended not to hear.

LINCOLN:

You must understand, General, I don't blame anybody for anything, and certainly not you.

*GRANT, looking away, barely inclines his head; knocks the ashes off his cigar and watches them fall*

It didn't use to be this way. After Antietam I blamed McClellan. After Gettysburg I blamed Meade—I hope he still is ignorant of how bitterly I blamed him for not pursuing and destroying Lee.

GRANT:

He knows. He is a bitter man himself.  
But never toward you now, Mr. President.

LINCOLN:

I don't find fault any more with anybody. Not with fate, even. It may be a weakness in me, but I find something here that no man could have controlled if he had tried. I tried, and was controlled. I tried, that is, to keep the war from meaning too much. At the very least it meant enough. Half of this country had decided to be half of nothing. But half of nothing is exactly nothing; and the war, I still think, means all it needs to mean if it restores those people to existence. There have been some among us, however, to whom it promised their destruction; and now their punishment—as if anything destroyed requires punishment; though the pun-



ishment in view, I do suppose, is only the final stroke of destruction.

*Pauses; looks directly at GRANT*

Where is Lee today, do you assume?

GRANT:

*Puzzled*

I have good maps of all his dispositions.

LINCOLN:

I mean the man himself. Where would you guess he was sitting at this moment? Or standing? Or lying down—I can imagine that—and resting? Make the best guess you can, and point that way.

GRANT:

*Standing up, turning slowly, and pointing*

About there, I should say.

LINCOLN:

*Twisting his chair to suit*

There is no stranger I would rather set eyes on. Perhaps I never will.

GRANT:

Not even then—after it's all over?

LINCOLN:

If it ever is.

*GRANT settles into his chair*

I know of course it will be. But the future is an odd thing. The deeper you peer into it the less you see distinctly. I see myself in Richmond after it falls——

GRANT:

*Startled*

In Richmond? That would be hazardous, I think.

LINCOLN:

Would it? Well, I'm used to hazards, or to rumors of hazards. Say, though, I did slip in—who else would be there? Certainly not Lee. He would keep moving somehow. I would only see his back.

*Turns to GRANT again*

We have destroyed him, General, inch by inch and drop by drop. Yet the man lives, and so does the South. Who would have supposed, with all our strength against him—look at this place: the boats, the piles of goods, the endless regiments of men—who would have thought he could last till March? Till April, it may be. A terrible purpose in him, General, and a terrible good—don't think I'm not aware of how much good, in him and in the South I myself was born in.

GRANT:

We all know, Mr. President, how you have  
No other wish than always to be just.

LINCOLN:

But justice, General! You may not know what a murderer of sleep it is—not to speak of men and countries. They thought they had a country, and they founded it on justice; so they said, and so believed. Yet we think it must be struck down. I say so, and

you call me just. Strike a good man to make him better: that is justice. Strike a country so that it shall never be again: that is justice, which we hope we practice. But justice in men is surely judged—and justly; which is to say, darkly. The justest man probably does nothing at all to anybody; he is what he is, and that is that. And so I might have lived had I known how to be as lazy as I liked and keep alive, and keep Mrs. Lincoln and our sons alive—the ones that lived.

*Pauses*

I think now, General, I might have made a pretty good job of doing nothing to anybody.

GRANT:

Not a bad life for any man.

*Looking off*

*For me.*

LINCOLN:

But there I was, having to do what I did; and I have done it as hard as I was able. Last month at Hampton Roads, where you wanted me to treat with their Commissioners, I held out against their notion that they had a country of any kind. There was only one, I said, and it was ours and theirs.

*Endeavors to sound casual*

I trust you agree, General.

*Waits through a few seconds of silence*

If you do, is that why you asked me to come down?

GRANT *stares ahead, chewing his cigar.* LINCOLN *watches him closely*

Well, I may be wrong, though there is one thing you will find I agree about. The war must be finished the first day or night it *can* be. Painful though it be to strike, the blow must fall. You have your plans, of course. Not that I am asking what they are. I don't do that with you.

GRANT:

*Smiles*

The one man with the right to never does.

*Serious*

But we have plans. Also we have advantages.  
As soon as they are pressed——

LINCOLN:

Press them! Use every man, do everything—press them! But then I am sure you know this.

GRANT:

I do.

LINCOLN:

I am kindhearted, and I kill a country; which nevertheless must live.

GRANT:

I understood you to deny there was one.

LINCOLN:

I mean I kill what they fought for. In my mind it never existed. In theirs, it did. The most I wanted to crush, and with your help,

General, have crushed, was the idea they had that they could be half of nothing, which again I say is nothing. I never wanted to crush *them*, as some do now. Or are you aware that some do? That many do? Millions, I'm afraid.

GRANT:

I am, of course. Who isn't, that reads newspapers?

LINCOLN:

Very well. Then I don't find it hard to say one further thing. Their idea is dead. They could never have lived *with* it—I was sure of this from the start—but now they should be allowed to live without it. Four years ago they demanded to be let alone. Well, the time has come. In my mind, General, it is as simple as that. It is staggeringly simple. The army they will surrender is something they have no use for any longer if they ever did. Take it out of their hands and they are free. And I mean free.

*Pauses*

But am I soft, General? And if so, dangerous?

GRANT:

*Turns deliberately in his chair and looks straight at LINCOLN, but then is diverted by the sudden reappearance of ADMIRAL PORTER and MRS. GRANT*

Back so soon, my dear?

*Both he and LINCOLN, confused, stand up*

MRS. GRANT:

I said too soon  
Myself, but my escort was absent-minded;

I think he never heard me name one ship;  
His thought was here with you; so all at once——

GRANT:

Well! But it is not for me to say  
Who comes and goes. The President, my dear——

MRS. GRANT:

I know, of course.

To LINCOLN

Your pardon, sir. For me  
At any rate.

LINCOLN:

*Laughing, and relieving the general embarrassment*  
Not him?

PORTER *smiles confidently*

Of course you are both welcome.

GRANT:

*Shrugging his shoulders*

But you, dear—I'll have someone take you safely——

LINCOLN:

No, General. At least let Mrs. Grant play with those little rebels.

*Points to the tree*

In my considered opinion *they* are not old enough yet to be let alone.

MRS. GRANT *turns to go, accepting a camp chair brought by the CORPORAL and sitting with her back to the audience throughout the talk that follows*

Well, Admiral, I was about to force this silent man into a confession. He was going to tell me I am dangerous.

GRANT *stares into the fire*

Perhaps you heard the tail end of it.

PORTER *hesitates*

Did you?

PORTER:

I did, sir. "Soft" and "dangerous"—those two words.

LINCOLN:

And what a pair. You might suppose they contradicted each other. In some minds, however, they don't: like man and wife, they are two in one.

PORTER:

First, Mr. President, I must make sure  
That I am welcome. Mrs. Grant was right—  
I wanted to be here, and here I am.  
Yet I am not a soldier. You two are,

LINCOLN *smiles and shakes his head*

And armies are your subject. I am only——

LINCOLN:

Now, now, Admiral. Don't run down what you did at Fort Fisher. You finished the blockade—there is only one gap left, at Galveston, and I guess we can let that go. No, you belong here.

*Glances at GRANT, who stolidly refuses to give any sign of agreement*

We were discussing——

PORTER:

*Eagerly*

Kittens, Mr. President, or tigers?

*Motions toward MRS. GRANT*

LINCOLN:

Why, now, that's shrewd. You couldn't have put it better. Those kittens there—you said their claws, if clipped, would only grow again. The same thing would be true of tigers, wouldn't it? Well, we talked of tigers.

PORTER:

Tigers, Mr. President? You mean  
Such claws as Lee, as Johnston? But the whole  
Live animal—you didn't speak of that?  
There is but one. It calls itself the South.

LINCOLN:

*Aware that GRANT has turned and is watching him*

The South, Admiral, does call itself by its own name—its family name. I use it myself. I call the South the South. But I don't remember ever calling it a tiger—though I like your notion that Lee and Johnston are a couple of claws. Good sharp ones, surely.

PORTER:

But there are others too. And all of them, clipped,  
Could grow again like mad. The beast is mad—  
The whole live beast is one mad thing, they say.



LINCOLN:

*They* say? Don't *you*? I don't want deputy opinions, Admiral. What in *your* judgment ought to be done? I mean, after the claws are clipped, which ought to be soon. The whole South—what about that? Would you prefer that it be left powerless to grow *anything* again? Corn? Tobacco? Women? Children? Men? Claws, even? Or else no claws. It might feel that it had had enough of those. But to feel, Admiral, it would have to be alive. To think, it would have to have a brain—and be free to use it.

PORTER:

Mr. President, you push me hard.

LINCOLN:

Oh, no, I don't. You wanted to take part in this conversation, and I said you were welcome. But not to tell me something I know already, namely, what *they* say. I hear that every minute where I come from—in my middle ear. I'm dizzy with it. Now, once *again*, what is Admiral Porter's program?

PORTER:

*Slowly at first, as if considering how much it will be safe to say; then, since he is not interrupted, picking up speed*

But I am not a statesman, Mr. President.  
I am not even a politician. Program?  
Too big a word for me, too big a thing.  
I only can inform you what my officers—  
And many of the General's—say at night  
When the stars take their testimony. Oh,  
Not all of his or mine; but more than a few;  
More, I would guess, than half. They say the work  
They've done will not be finished with surrender.

The lives they have seen lost will not be paid for  
By a gold pen on paper. After that—  
I quote them, Mr. President—the tiger  
Must yield his very heart up; or be staked  
And chained so he can never stretch again.  
Never—that's their word. They don't say freedom.  
They have no trust in that. It's war to the end,  
And then beyond the end—well, no more tiger.

LINCOLN:

*After a pause*

Don't tell me, Admiral, the Navy isn't full of statesmen—or politicians, if you will. Your fellows hardly sound like sailors at all. Or his

*Waving toward GRANT*

like soldiers. I wonder if you don't exaggerate their number. It's often a good thing to count noses.

PORTER:

I haven't, I admit. But I can tell you  
Something more than this—with your permission.

LINCOLN:

You have that.

PORTER:

*Watching him circumspectly*

It's what they say of you—whom still they worship,  
But the deep good in you that bred the worship,  
The loving-kindness, sir, is not the one

Thing needful now. I speak of their opinion——

LINCOLN:

*Not too patiently*

Of course, of course.

PORTER:

*Takes one step back and folds his hands in front of him*

And have none of my own. I must assure you  
That *I* shall never cavil at your judgments.

LINCOLN:

*Smiling as he turns and looks away*

But *they* will?

PORTER:

As much as those who weary you in Washington.  
The Capital, the field—there is no difference.  
The General could tell you if he would  
How he has heard them too. And what I hear  
Is that he doesn't argue. So they assume  
Agreement.

*GRANT suddenly stands up, straightening his shoulders with difficulty*

I've assumed as much myself.

GRANT:

*Without looking at PORTER*

Mr. President, you asked me something;

Then we were interrupted. "Am I soft?"  
You said. "And if so, then am I dangerous?"

LINCOLN:

*Fearfully*

But I'm in no hurry for an answer. Take your time, General, take all the time you please. Tomorrow——

GRANT:

You are no softer, sir, than I am. That's  
My answer any day. I find you sensible.  
And sensible men, I think, cannot be dangerous.

*Sits again and resumes his interest in the fire*

LINCOLN:

*Gets up in excitement*

The very word I used to Wade! Hard sense, I believe I said. Well, well! So it's out of you at last.

*GRANT favors him with a slow grin*

Or is it? You're not quoting, are you, like the Admiral here? Not me, for instance? That wouldn't do.

GRANT:

I had my own opinion. Now *you* have it.

LINCOLN:

*Sits down and stretches his legs luxuriously toward the fire*

Good, good! But now—let's see, what was I to ask you next? If you're not tired, I'm not.

GRANT:

No, I'm not tired. I even am refreshed—  
A sort of second wind, sir, over the hill.

LINCOLN:

But the Admiral may be tired.

PORTER *seems to be looking for a chair that does not exist*

And if so, he is welcome to join Mrs. Grant—if her husband agrees.

GRANT *lifts one hand slightly, indicating assent*

Poor lady, she must be lonesome. But Admiral!

PORTER *has turned to go*

This is only if you like. I'm not sending you away.

PORTER *smiles his unbelief*

Or if I am, I do it gratefully. You have done me almost as vast a service as you did the country at Fort Fisher. Perhaps you will never quite know what you did. But it was God's plenty. Thank you—and Mrs. Grant, I am convinced, needs your company. It is charming company, as I know I shall find out on the *Malvern*. Remember that, Admiral.

PORTER:

*Bowing and smiling*

I will, of course. And thank you, Mr. President,  
For listening as you did to what they say.  
They could be wrong, I know. The best of men,  
With one exception, sir, can be dead wrong.

LINCOLN *does not smile as PORTER walks toward MRS. GRANT, slowly, so as not to miss the first few remarks that follow. They seem to satisfy him, and he goes on to join her*

LINCOLN:

*Watching him go*

General, I've found a pearl—if you don't mind being thought of as the oyster.

GRANT:

I've been thought of as worse things, Mr. President.

LINCOLN:

So have I. Much worse. But here's a queer thing. I asked you whether I was too soft. Now I must ask you whether I am hard enough. Am I, General? Do I *press* you as I should? And will *you* be hard? Will you make it clear to Lee how useless his remnant of an army is at last?

GRANT:

All I can say is, I intend to, sir.

LINCOLN:

*Relaxing and sitting down again*

The very words of someone else. On the way here this morning I stopped in at one of your hospitals.

GRANT:

We have plenty of those.

LINCOLN:

But not many young men like a captain whose left leg was amputated. Just below the knee, and he had had many hemorrhages. The surgeon told me he might never recover from the loss of so much blood. His eyes were large as he looked at me—he was surprised, naturally, to see me there. I asked to see the stump, but the surgeon said no, it was too terrible. I lifted the sheet anyway. It *was* terrible.

GRANT *winces and looks away*

I have heard, General, that you can't endure such spectacles, and usually I can't. As I put the sheet back, all I could think of saying to him—I had to bend down so he could hear me—was this: "You *must* get well, my boy, you *must* get well." And what do you think he whispered? "I intend to, sir."

GRANT:

What was his name? Did the surgeon tell you that?

LINCOLN:

Here.

*Takes a slip of paper out of his hat and gives it to GRANT*

What will you do with it, General?

GRANT:

I'll send for news tonight. And if he lives,  
Or if the war lasts long enough, promote him.

LINCOLN:

Let it not last.

*Rises again; BOTH MEN are silent a few seconds*

Well, General, you still haven't told me why I'm here.

GRANT:

Why should I, sir? You have been saying it plainly.

LINCOLN:

*Studying him*

Saying, however, only one side of it. When you see General Lee—

GRANT  *rubs his chin*

you will, you will—keep in mind that your side of the subject, however much it may resemble mine, is nevertheless not the *same* side. You are to treat, I'm sure you understand, only of military matters.

GRANT:

I understand, and I am much relieved.

LINCOLN:

Nothing about the States.

GRANT:

No.

LINCOLN:

Nor property, nor pardon.

GRANT:

No.



LINCOLN:

Nothing about peace, even. That is for governments to make.

GRANT:

I understand.

LINCOLN:

Then what is left to you?

GRANT:

The terms of their parole—assuming surrender.

LINCOLN:

Let us assume it. Well, I leave particulars to you. Gladly.

GRANT:

I have them in my mind. They are such terms,  
If I may use your language, Mr. President,  
As will set free all members of Lee's army,  
Including Lee himself, to go home presently  
And live what life is left. They are brief and simple.

LINCOLN:

I would bet on that. Now, General, I said to assume surrender.  
But Lee is in the field, and so is Johnston. Can Sherman hold Johnston where he is?

GRANT:

I never doubted him, nor do I now.

LINCOLN:

I mean, and come here too? I ought to see Sherman, now that I have seen you. He will have *his* terms to make, and I should like them to resemble yours. What do you think, General? Should I go down there? Why are you smiling?

GRANT:

I sent for Sherman. He is coming up.

LINCOLN:

*Joyfully*

Excellent! But is it safe?

GRANT:

Johnston, you mean? Well, *I* would bet on *that*.

LINCOLN:

Excellent! We can all talk together, on the *River Queen*. Bring him as soon as he shows up. Of course, I'm a bit afraid of Sherman.

GRANT:

How could that be, Mr. President?

LINCOLN:

There have been times when his opinion of me was good and low.

GRANT:

Not low, but watchful. At the worst, uncertain.  
He is a fiery fellow, and he doubts  
The fire in others till he sees——

LINCOLN:

What? Smoke?

GRANT *nods*

Lord, he has seen enough of that.

GRANT:

He has seen plenty. Sherman is educated.  
He thinks the South is, too. He thinks it knows  
The horror of a war at last. He loves  
The South—and swears they never will believe it.  
And probably they won't. For Sherman burned  
Houses and barns; he confiscated hams  
And fowls; he stole their mules, their sweet potatoes;  
And some of them say he took the family silver.  
So he'll not be forgiven—as Lee and I  
In good time will, for only letting blood,  
For digging all these graves.

*Looks down and away*

People's lives  
Are less than their possessions—so it seems,  
Sometimes. He will never be forgiven.

*As LINCOLN inclines his head, considering this, MRS. GRANT  
and PORTER return from the tree*

MRS. GRANT:

Have we come back too soon? I heard no secrets.

LINCOLN and GRANT *stand up*

PORTER:

Nor I.

GRANT:

No, not too soon. I think we have finished.

*Looks at LINCOLN*

LINCOLN:

The fact is, I must go.

*He does not move*

Mrs. Grant, will you forgive me? I sent for you—interrupted whatever you were doing—and then had nothing to say, or next to nothing. Another time it will be different.

MRS. GRANT:

Oh, many times, I hope. With Mrs. Lincoln.

LINCOLN:

Yes, with her. Even now, if it weren't so near noon, there is a story I could tell you.

MRS. GRANT:

Do, anyway. Please do. There must be time.

LINCOLN:

No, not today. For one thing, I don't know the end of it. I only know that it begins, Madam, with three bloodthirsty men in a little boat.

MRS. GRANT:

You mean you have *forgotten* how it ends?

LINCOLN:

*Laughing*

Not exactly. I said, mind you, I didn't know. Do you, General?

GRANT:

I think so. But I'll let you tell it later.

Next week, perhaps, when you know too.

MRS. GRANT:

Oh, now

I understand. You three. A hunting party!

LINCOLN and GRANT *grin at each other*. PORTER *looks mystified*

GRANT:

Well, dear, why not? Good morning, sir. Keep safe.

*Motions LINCOLN to be escorted out by PORTER and himself.*  
*The three soldiers present arms*

*Curtain*



## Scene Four

*In Jefferson Davis's office, the White House, Richmond. Windows waist-high facing the audience.*

*Enter ADMIRAL PORTER, holding his ears against the din of Negroes' voices outside. He goes from window to window, to see that all are locked; but at the last one he is too late—it opens noisily and several Negroes' heads are thrust in. Confused cries are heard: "Massa Linkum," "Kingdom Come," "Hallelujah, Oh, Lord!"; etc. PORTER turns away in discomfort, and sees for the first time an aged Negro who has been standing by the mantel in great dignity, and who ignores the Negroes at the window.*

PORTER:

Now who are you? Not one of those, I know.

BUTLER:

That's right, sir. I'm the butler of this house,  
That is, before today. I can't guess now

Just where I ought to go. But what she said—  
The Missus—I done done, and you can see.

PORTER:

Mrs. Davis?

*The BUTLER scrapes*

Did you lay a fuse  
To blow us up, you rascal?

*Looks around*

BUTLER:

What she said—  
The Missus—I done done. How does it look?

PORTER:

How does *what* look? See here, what *have* you done?

*Starts inspecting; lifts lids of boxes, parts curtains*

BUTLER:

The Missus said to neaten the whole house  
For the new people comin'. Is you one  
Of them, sir?

PORTER:

What do you think? Of course I am.  
But that was all?

BUTLER:

Yes, sir. That enough?



PORTER:

I beg your pardon, and your Ladyship's.  
It was a handsome thought. Doubtless proud,  
But then why not? We thank you. It looks well.

*Rubs top of a mahogany table with his gloved finger. No dust*

BUTLER:

Are you this Massa Linkum that them rabbles  
Holler so about?

PORTER:

What if I were?  
Have you a special message for the President?

BUTLER:

The President's done gone. I see you ain't  
That bobolition one. When's he acomin'?

PORTER:

Soon. But why?

BUTLER:

I got to see that man—  
Just see him.

PORTER:

Then you wait—there, in that corner.  
But you can't *stay* here.

BUTLER:

No, sir, I don't want to.  
Where I go next—that's what nobody knows.  
But I'm done gone as soon as I seen *him*.

PORTER:

What is your name?

BUTLER:

Robert.

*He goes to his corner*

*Enter a* LIEUTENANT *of cavalry*

PORTER:

Neither is this  
The President. Lieutenant, where *is* the President?  
What have you done with him?

LIEUTENANT:

I couldn't cope, sir,  
With an old man who stopped him at the door.  
He shook his cane and shouted, so that I figured  
To drive him off at once; but then my orders  
Were to come here—the President was firm—  
And there was no harm, surely, in so palsied,  
So peppery an ancient.

PORTER:

Probably not.  
The President is abler with his tongue  
Than most men, Lieutenant. He's been with me

For five days now on the *Malvern*, and I swear  
I'm entertained. The second of those mornings  
I waited to see how he would acknowledge something.  
His stateroom was too short by a full foot—  
I had thought of this too late, the first night  
He slept in it; and he had not complained.  
But all that day, while he was gone ashore,  
I had my men rebuild both bed and cabin—  
Cunningly, and varnish them again.  
Well! How do you think he thanked me over breakfast?  
"Admiral," he said, "I've shrunk a foot."  
He somehow always can surprise you. Weary?  
Yes, and I've protected him from fools.  
But somewhere at the center he's on guard.  
Who was the ancient mariner?

LIEUTENANT:

Duff Green,  
I think he said. I told you, with a cane—  
Here they are now.

*Door bursts open and DUFF GREEN enters first, walking backward before LINCOLN and waving a long stick*

GREEN:

And the South, sir, will never cease to hate you—  
And your abomination of a party,  
That calls itself Republican yet grinds  
The pure republic that we had to powder.  
There were four times you could have listened to us  
Before the shouting started, in those months  
Of Sixty-One when compromises grew  
Like mushrooms overnight; but then at dawn

You stamped and mashed them. So three other times,  
Now at the end, or near it. Who was a better  
Friend than little Alexander Stephens,  
Years ago, or lately at Hampton Roads?  
And still you trampled on him—not to speak  
Of Campbell and of Hunter: good old Justice  
Campbell—think of him and hate yourself!

LINCOLN:

Now, Mr. Green, you ought to know as an old newspaper publisher what I know as an old newspaper reader: a thing said too many times may not be true. You've told me everything ten times; so I can wonder. But I'll simply say a second time, and not a third, that I believe nobody understands better than I do what things your South (and my South) went to war to save. But by going to war it lost them. That's too bad, too bad. And Stephens, I think, knows it.

GREEN:

Well, some say he's a Unionist at heart.  
But the Vice-President of my country—No!  
I say he's *not* one, any more than I am.

LINCOLN:

Oh, you're not one. But he always was, or else when we were in Congress together—let me see, seventeen years ago, which was when Mrs. Lincoln and I boarded with you at Mrs. Sprigg's house—remember?

GREEN *waves this away as irrelevant*

You look at me as if you never saw me before; as if we never told stories together on dull nights when the band failed to play outside the windows. But that's all right. What was I saying? Oh, yes.

If Stephens hadn't been a Unionist then I mightn't have liked the little man so much. You do admit he's little. It was a raw February day at Hampton Roads, and he came on board with three overcoats that reached clear to the floor. He took them off in the hot cabin, though, one after another; and I remember saying I had never seen such a little nubbin come out of so much shuck. A feverish fellow, with blackberry eyes. You may not know that I asked what service I could do him, and he said he had a nephew in one of our prisons. I sent him the nephew.

GREEN:

Nero, doing favors while he fiddled!

GREEN *backs perilously near the fender before the fireplace*

LINCOLN:

So there you go again. But watch out, Mr. Green, where you go next. Into the fireplace, unless someone says "Whoa!" Which reminds me of our fireplace at Springfield. Do you remember that little city? It is in Illinois. You sat there calmly with the coal tongs in your hand when you came out to see me in Sixty. You don't remember, but we were friends then, Mr. Green. Neither of us thought there would have to be a war.

GREEN:

*Backing more slowly*

*Have to!* As a Kentuckian, I say——

PORTER:

Why, Mr. President, this gentleman  
Honors you every step. He takes it backward,  
As if he were in court, and you the emperor.

GREEN *waves his stick wildly at PORTER, yet comes to a halt and still addresses LINCOLN*

GREEN:

Just so you know, sir, that the South, God love it,  
Will hate you to eternity—that's all.  
Its first city burning as one bonfire,  
And you parade the streets. Why did you come here,  
Lincoln? Couldn't you bear old Petersburg's  
Appearance? When you went there it was dust  
And ashes. Was it ugly, so you came  
For comfort to this fairest of our towns?  
But what have you seen? Cinders too, and wailing——

LINCOLN:

I saw its own people stoning warehouses for food their government denied them. I saw its Negroes—

*Looks toward the window where faces stare at him, as they have been doing ever since he entered, in awed silence*

mistakenly, I tell you—bowing down to me.

GREEN:

You say "mistaken" like a hypocrite—  
Oh, yes, so humble and so indecisive,  
So overestimated, so unworthy:  
Women and preachers dote on such a part,  
Therefore you play it bravely. But we know,  
*We* know down here, how hard the center is,  
How merciless the craft; and surely some  
That watch you every day up there in Washington—  
Surely *they* know, surely they do, Uriah.

You praise your generals for our destruction,  
When all the time *you* wrought it. You were there  
Always, binding will and will together;  
You alone humiliated us!

LINCOLN:

Mistakenly, I say.

*Looks wearily toward Jefferson Davis's chair behind the desk, shuffles over to it, and slumps down, his long arms on the polished top, his head drooping until it threatens to detach itself and fall*

Could anybody bring me a glass of water? Cold, if possible. But any kind.

PORTER:

Robert!

LINCOLN:

*Looks up briefly*

Admiral, you and the lieutenant are safe, I see. Now who is Robert?

PORTER:

*Pointing*

The Davis's old butler. He says they told him—  
Or Mrs. Davis did—to have the house  
All orderly and clean for us—for you,  
Of course she meant. Robert, did you hear?  
The President needs water. Don't you *hear*?

BUTLER:

*Stares, as he has been doing since LINCOLN entered, then slowly turns away, bewildered because he sees nobody who looks to him like a President*

The President, he's gone, and where he walks  
I spose he powerful thirsty. But this man—  
He thirsty too. I'll see if I can find some.

*Goes out, and ALL watch in silence till HE comes back with a tall goblet on a silver tray*

Here, sir, but I couldn't make it cold.

LINCOLN:

*Looks up again, smiles wearily, and takes it*

Thank you, Robert.

*Drinks*

What will you do now? Where will you go? Could you catch up with the President? Or Mrs. President? Nobody knows, I'm afraid though, where she is.

BUTLER:

No, sir, nobody knows. My sister's house—  
Maybe it ain't burnt yet. That's where I'll try  
And see if *she's* still there. You won't find food  
Down cellar, but the shelves is all been rubbed.  
I seen to it myself.

*Goes out reluctantly, looking back as he reaches the door*

PORTER:

Thank you, Robert.



LINCOLN:

*Waving before his head droops again*

You are the best soul in this good city.

GREEN:

A cornerstone kicked loose. And so the building  
Falls, and Richmond burns. And so, Lincoln,  
Beware! Where so much death is, more can be.

*Starts leaving the room, following ROBERT*

A life struck down may still have anger in it—

*At the door*

One spark of spirit that was never spent.

*Goes out almost unnoticed as the NEGROES at the window  
grow noisier—so much so that LINCOLN, rousing himself,  
points in that direction*

LINCOLN:

Lieutenant, for God's sake tell them to go away. They are as hard  
on me as *he* was.

*Looks at the door through which GREEN has gone*

LIEUTENANT:

Yes, sir.

*Goes and forcibly shuts the window, then closes the white  
wooden shutters so that no more faces are there*

LINCOLN:

I suppose I shouldn't have come here today. My reason, if I  
know it, was nothing like the one Green attributes to me. Rea-

sons, motives—I have long since ceased to assign them either to myself or to men I disagree with. That is one of the few human weaknesses I really think I have got rid of. Old Duff would never believe me when I say I *think* I came to see what could be done for Richmond, now that its own people are burning it to the ground, and now that it has no army to protect it from ours. Where is Lee now, and where is Grant?

PORTER:

Well west of here, along the Appomattox.  
I think you needn't fear Lee will escape.

LINCOLN:

Oh, but he may. And meanwhile, Admiral, we have set up headquarters here. Where is General Weitzel? He's in charge. I expected to find him in this room.

PORTER:

You will soon see him, Mr. President.  
He's coming with Judge Campbell, whom you know.

LINCOLN:

Yes. Last month at Hampton Roads, where the peace talks failed. And four years ago, in Washington, when he thought—and what man didn't?—to sprinkle cool words on the fire that threatened our common country. He called it that then—"our common country"—and so did I; so did we all. At Hampton Roads, however, he refused to—either for his own reasons or for those of Jefferson Davis, whose commissioner he was, along with little Stephens. I wonder what the Judge will say now. Davis has run away, reasons and all.

*The shouting of NEGROES is heard again outside. LINCOLN looks toward the shutters—and starts, as the others do, when one of them is nearly forced open*

LIEUTENANT:

Shall I go out, sir, and drive them off?

LINCOLN:

By no means. Thank you, Lieutenant, but I was too impatient before. They must act and speak as the spirit moves them, however much they misunderstand my part in this business. Perhaps you don't understand it either. I'm not sure *I* do. All I know is that if I had told them the truth out there today they wouldn't have listened. I suspect they never will. The truth, Lieutenant, is that I proclaimed their freedom in order to win the war—in order to weaken their masters, who were still strong enough to make the Proclamation pointless unless the war *was* won. Three years ago—can you remember that far back?—Emancipation was a military necessity; and now it is a fact in their poor lives. What I once desired, and thought I foresaw, was the ultimate extinction of slavery, by 1900 or thereabouts, in a land at peace with itself. How could I have spoken of these things today? While thousands of white faces stared at me without a sound, from windows and doors and porches and the tops of lampposts, those colored people called me Savior, they blessed me, they wanted to bow down before me—I shouldn't say this, but so it was—like God himself, whose purposes I have never pretended to know better than any other man. They capered and sang, and surrounded me in such numbers that I'd have been lost without you, Lieutenant, to push a path open.

LIEUTENANT:

It wasn't easy. I was worried for you.

LINCOLN:

I know you were. And what of them? Those people have suffered, and they will suffer yet. Old Green is right about this. But the worst thing is that they misunderstood me. They held up sick children to look at me and be cured of what ailed them; and if nothing ailed them they held them up to be cured of that. And all the time they called me "Fadder Abraham, Oh, Lord!"

PORTER:

I heard them, Mr. President, and rejoiced.

LINCOLN:

But not for me, I hope. You should have thought of me, Admiral, as of one lost at sea, among higher waves than can be imagined. The power in those hearts was like a storm. I didn't generate it; neither did they; there it simply was, blowing all the way here from Antietam, Gettysburg, and the Wilderness. And they thought I had caused the storm; they thought I rode it. Where will it take us, Admiral?

PORTER:

Remember, Mr. President, how close  
Grant is to Lee along the Appomattox,  
And how tomorrow, or some other day,  
Lee will resign the game; and then remember  
Sherman—what he said to you at last.

LINCOLN:

Yes, Admiral, it is good to remember that day on the *River Queen*. How do you account for the way Sherman looked when I told him that he and Grant were the only generals who never had found fault with me?

PORTER:

Sherman was humbled. He remembered, surely,  
The harsh things he had said since Sixty-One.

LINCOLN:

Don't tell me what they were.

*Smiles*

GENERAL WEITZEL *enters*

Well, General. And where is the Judge?

WEITZEL:

Duff Green waylaid him; but he won't be long.

LINCOLN:

Oh, but he may be. I recall saying once that McClellan had the  
"slows." Mr. Green has something worse: the "stays." But, Gen-  
eral, how is it out there? The fires——

WEITZEL:

Most of them, Mr. President, are put out.  
There is more smoke and water now than flame;  
And something at last like order in the streets.

LINCOLN:

You deserve great credit for this.

WEITZEL:

The quiet, Mr. President, may be a sign  
That many men out there are wondering now  
What bitter fruit the tree of their defeat  
Will bear when——

*Stops and looks at LINCOLN*

LINCOLN:

When what, General? What kind of tree am I to understand it is?

WEITZEL:

In a certain song, sour apple. So they have heard;  
And so they wonder now what fruit will hang——

LINCOLN:

General, don't use that word. One reason I am here is that I had sickened of its very sound. Jeff Davis, of course they mean—as if there could be anything worse for him than that I am sitting in his chair—

*He strokes its arms reflectively*

and so with all the other leaders. But haven't they run away?

*Enter JUDGE CAMPBELL, unseen for the moment by LINCOLN as he adds*

I hope they have.

WEITZEL:

Not this one.

LINCOLN *looks up*

He will stay until the end.

LINCOLN:

*Rises and crosses over to shake hands*

Judge Campbell!

CAMPBELL:

Mr. Lincoln.

*Takes his hand, lets it go, stands formally—so formally, in fact, that neither speaks for a moment*

LINCOLN:

We have never met, so far as I can remember, except in circumstances that constrained us both. That is the penalty we pay for living in a time of crisis. And now perhaps the constraint seems greater to you than ever. But *I* would like it to be less. In my own mind, Judge Campbell——

CAMPBELL, *ignoring amenities, interrupts LINCOLN to say what he has come to say; and says it as if he had learned it by heart*

CAMPBELL:

In *my* mind, Mr. Lincoln, there is only  
This. Supposing a legislative body,  
Or something honestly calling itself that,  
Exists today in Virginia, and is capable  
Of meeting to withdraw its troops from the field—  
Well, Mr. Lincoln, could that body meet?  
And if it did, would you accept the act?

LINCOLN:

*Not having expected so definite an opening, temporizes while he looks quizzically at CAMPBELL*

Only that? It is so much less than Mr. Green told me was in *his* mind.

CAMPBELL:

And I have told you what *I* came to ask.  
Nothing less than that, and nothing more.

LINCOLN:

I see.

*Looking down, moving objects on the desk*

You say "its troops," meaning of course Virginia's. The armies of Virginia, Judge, are commanded by a man named Lee.

CAMPBELL *bows*

And they haven't surrendered yet.

CAMPBELL:

They would if this were done. Lee is obedient—  
They are obedient—and the end is near.

LINCOLN:

I see.

*Looking down, yet looking up soon again to study* CAMPBELL

I should be grateful to you, Judge, for being so particular, so soon. But I must think about this. It comes so very soon, before the end you speak of. And it tangles itself with many thoughts that I have had, and many others than myself have had—some of them with me, some of them against me—as to the matter of beginning over again in the United States. Should I take it that there is such a thing for you as the United States? And that it includes, or could include, Virginia? You are not a Virginian yourself.



CAMPBELL:

Alabama is my State, of course.  
But I am speaking, Mr. Lincoln, for Virginia.

LINCOLN:

I can believe that. They would trust you, as I do. But we must both trust *words*—I speak as lawyer to lawyer—and make sure which words we trust. Misunderstanding would be pretty easy; not so much today as tomorrow, or next week—next month.

CAMPBELL:

You have no obligation to respond.

LINCOLN:

But I have. In my own mind, I mean: certainly I am obliged to answer you as well as I can. Yet you may not realize how extraordinary your request is—and it may be, how dangerous.

CAMPBELL *simply waits, suggesting that he does realize it*

You may not know how many persons hope that Virginia *as a State* will never exist again,

CAMPBELL *stiffens visibly*

and if so, how little point there is in what you propose. You probably know that I am not one of those persons.

CAMPBELL *relaxes ever so little*

But they are powerful, and they will learn what I say to you almost as soon as I say it. Their disapproval could hurt you too. Nevertheless, let me see. Would such a body meet for any other purpose than the one you cite? And having met, would it disband again?

CAMPBELL:

I am as deeply interested as you are  
In the new life of the United States.  
And part of that, I take it, is this body  
Which may or may not meet. I do confess  
I thought it would have further things to do—  
Itself or some successor—some——

LINCOLN:

There you are. Successor. Certainly there will have to be law-makers in Virginia, as in all the States, constructed or reconstructed. But who will they be, and how far can it be left to them to do what is best for the one common country which at Hampton Roads you showed no disposition to discuss? Remember, Judge: your instructions then from Mr. Davis were to secure peace if you could to what he insisted upon calling "the two countries." Nothing else would do. And there was no life in that. So we talked for four hours on the *River Queen*—you and Stephens and Hunter, and Seward and myself—and said nothing.

CAMPBELL:

That was then. This, as you know, is now.

LINCOLN:

I do know. But I shall have to think about this matter, as I said. I am not the entire government up there,

*Waving an arm awkwardly*

though in both sections I have been accused of thinking I was. I count for something, but so does the Senate; so does my Cabinet; and so do millions of unelected persons whose opinion, in so far as I can discover it, I must consult. There is a faction whose

members suspect me of magnanimity. I repudiate the charge. Magnanimity—what could be more meaningless? So with vindictiveness—what could have less value? The future is the thing. When the future shall have become the present, unless I am badly mistaken it will stand on what is true then—and what, if we could only know it, is true now. The truth is what we have to find.

*Lost for a moment, considering*

But I can tell you this much. If the gentlemen you have in mind desire to come together for the simple purpose we *both* have in mind; and if they will undertake to separate as soon as that is done; then, Judge, I can promise safe-conduct to and from the meeting. As for the future, we must all abide it, North and South.

CAMPBELL:

You promise this much then—I mean, this little.  
Yet it is something. Can it be in writing?

LINCOLN:

I think so—this evening. General Weitzel will deliver it.

*Looks at WEITZEL, who nods*

And then we shall see what they say about it up there. Must you go now?

CAMPBELL *has turned away*

CAMPBELL:

I came to ask this, and I have the answer.

LINCOLN:

Friend to friend, as well as lawyer to lawyer, we could have spoken of easier and pleasanter things. But I am tired too. I will not detain you.

CAMPBELL goes out, and LINCOLN's head sinks to the desk—he has been making more of an effort than appeared

WEITZEL:

Mr. President, there is a couch  
In the next room, where Davis used to nap.  
Robert, the old butler, told me so.

LINCOLN:

Thank you, General.

*He rouses himself and brightens apologetically, to make amends for any discourtesy of which his fatigue may have made him seem guilty*

I find it an attractive thought; and doubtless it is an attractive couch. Long enough, too, Admiral,

PORTER smiles significantly at the LIEUTENANT

for Davis was a tall man. But if I did lie down with his poor ghost, neither of us might ever wake up again.

WEITZEL:

Just as you say. I know you must go on.

LINCOLN:

Yes, with the Admiral,

*Who bows*

and with the Lieutenant

*Who imitates the ADMIRAL*

to open a path wide enough for two to walk in. The wedding party, General, is returning—to a small barge without a name, rowed by twelve men who I hope have been resting. We started

out splendidly this morning, in nothing less than Admiral Porter's flagship. And we were escorted by the *River Queen*, which brought Mrs. Lincoln and me from Washington; also by Captain Barnes's *Bat*, which would have been big enough for me if I had come alone.

*Looks away a second or so*

But none of those proud ships mastered obstructions and low water. So we shall board the barge. We are like the fellow who once came to me to ask for an appointment as a minister abroad. Finding he could not get that, he asked to be made a collector in some domestic port. Finding he could not get that, he asked me for an old pair of trousers. It is well to be humble,

*Looks down*

whatever Duff Green says.

WEITZEL:

When necessary, sir. So I have learned,  
By listening, what our policy should be.

LINCOLN:

*Looks up sharply*

Policy? So soon? What is it, General?

WEITZEL:

Well, magnanimity is not the *word*.

LINCOLN:

A good *thing*, though.

WEITZEL:

Nor charity.

LINCOLN:

Charity.

*Starts walking the floor*

General, let's try to get along without words. The situation is the thing. And I must leave you to understand it, since you will be here and I won't. Charity, though—

*Walks very slowly*

if it's a *thing*, what is it? Being cautious? Being scrupulous? Yes—yes, in part.

*Stops suddenly and looks at WEITZEL*

General, do you want to know what I think it is?

WEITZEL:

*Startled, drawing his heels together*

I do, sir. So would any living man.

LINCOLN:

*Smiling*

Now I may disappoint you. It is simply, I think, the knowledge that other men have souls.

*Starts toward the door*

Well, General, good luck.

*WEITZEL salutes; all go out*

*Curtain*

## Scene Five

*The same as Scene Two. Morning, April 10th.*

*JOSHUA SPEED is waiting in the office; he is looking out of a window through which sounds of cheering, singing, and fired salutes pour in.*

*Enter STANTON, without being seen at first by SPEED, who when he hears STANTON speak turns and answers without enthusiasm.*

STANTON:

Hello, Speed. What have you done with the President?

SPEED:

Mr. Stanton, now you flatter me.

I can do nothing with a man so torn

Between his joy that General Lee has quit

And his own doubts of what may happen next.

STANTON:

He's right for once. But where in God's name is he?

SPEED:

I think he went for news of Mr. Seward.  
He called on him last night, you know, the first thing  
After his boat had docked. He came because  
Of that. He found the Secretary better—  
And better still because the war was ending.  
He told him so, and Mr. Seward smiled—  
Though it hurt to do it, with those injuries.

STANTON:

A pretty time for an important man  
To let himself be thrown out of his carriage!  
What if we all did that—what if *I* did!

SPEED:

You never would, we know. But here he is.

*LINCOLN enters, evidently expecting to see only SPEED, but gives STANTON his attention*

LINCOLN:

Well, Mars, good morning—for the second time today. You will be glad to learn that Seward continues to mend. Our Secretary of State thrives on good news. Even last night, when I told him how things looked in Virginia, he brightened up like an old dollar. But that was before word came of the surrender. I can imagine him then, in that horse collar of his the doctors put on to keep him from nodding his head and breaking his neck—he must have flickered like a lantern at the bottom of a well. It was all I could do this morning to restrain myself from going over there; he must have heard the guns and the yelling, just as we did, and I'd have liked to hear him on the subject. I miss Seward.



STANTON:

We all do. But I came in here to tell you——

LINCOLN:

I miss the way he says things. He is a wicked, unbelieving man—people say so, and I have no direct evidence to the contrary—but he has been almost my best company these four years. I remember him on New Year's Day in Sixty-Three. Orville Browning, whom no one has ever found too witty, called to say he thought the Emancipation Proclamation was a mistake because unnecessary. Well, Seward took care of my old friend by telling him of a New Englander who kicked because a Liberty Pole was being erected at some expense to his village, and therefore to him. We have the liberty, he said, so why the pole? And someone answered: What is liberty without a pole? So Seward answered Browning: What is War without a Proclamation?

STANTON:

I heard him. Mr. Lincoln, I came to tell you——

LINCOLN:

He might have said, of course, What is Emancipation without a Proclamation? But that would have been rubbing it into Congress that I had freed the slaves before it did—or *told* them they were free; they weren't yet; there was only a Proclamation, and this was Seward's point—that I had done whatever I did for my own reasons; which were, as I confessed then, more military than moral. The Senate, my dear Stanton, is dreadfully moral. Or it says it is. But you came here to tell me what?

STANTON:

Two things, Mr. Lincoln; and some Senators Agree with what I'll say.

LINCOLN:

As to both things?

STANTON:

Certainly. And we are but a few  
Of those who will be wondering tomorrow,  
When everything is public, who surrendered  
To who at Appomattox.

LINCOLN:

Don't you know? I saw you reading the telegrams. And I'm sure  
your windows rattled when the cannon boomed. What do you  
suppose all this singing in the streets could be about? Are we in  
Richmond?

STANTON:

You know, I think, precisely what I mean.

LINCOLN:

You and some Senators. Let's see. Could Sumner be among  
them? Wade, and Chandler? Julian? Not my old friend Trumbull,  
I think. A wonder they didn't burst in here. They still may. I'll  
try not to be engaged.

STANTON:

I am not one of them, though on these points——

LINCOLN:

Why, Stanton, you're not a Senator at all.

STANTON:

I stand on no ground that is not my ground.

LINCOLN:

Of course, of course.

*Abandons his sarcasm*

That is how you came to win the war when nobody else could. I know this, Mr. Secretary; nor do I lump you with those others. You can't be lumped. Now this may seem a strange time to tell you how often I have thought you right. You told somebody once I was a damned fool, and he repeated the opinion to me, expecting fireworks. But there were no fireworks; I said you knew what you were talking about if any man did.

STANTON:

*Softening*

I was harassed that day. I apologize.

LINCOLN:

No, don't. I would rather have you as you are than have any other man on my own terms. I may not always appear to believe this; but the fact is, I do.

STANTON:

Thank you.

*His voice steadily rises to its original pitch*

Nevertheless I find them furious,  
And can't, with a good conscience, reassure them.  
They say that Grant fell over his own feet

To be magnanimous at Appomattox;  
That Lee will move in on our sentiments now  
Till he has reached the center; and that Richmond,  
For all our victory, will govern Washington.  
They say that——

LINCOLN:

*His sarcasm returning*

What? Do they say more? They must have talked since sunrise—  
one spelling the other, as we used to ride and tie on the roads in  
Illinois: one man would ride the horse a mile ahead, tie him to a  
tree, and walk on until the second man——

STANTON:

Yes, they say more. They say that Justice Campbell  
Is to yourself as Lee is to the man  
Who whipped him. They are swearing that Virginia  
Must never be permitted such a meeting  
As you consented to six days ago.  
They think there is a strange resemblance suddenly  
Between you and the General—as if  
At City Point, perhaps, you became partners—  
And Sherman, crazy Sherman, for a third.  
God knows, if this is so, what he and Johnston  
Will sign and seal down there in Carolina—  
After, of course, kissing each other's hands.

LINCOLN:

*Gentler again*

Now as to Justice Campbell—plain Judge is what I called him,  
and I hope I offended no propriety. Lee's surrender yesterday

puts quite a new complexion on the meeting he proposed and I—provisionally, mind you—accepted. The purpose of the meeting *was* surrender. Well, it has happened; and so we shall have to think about the meeting. I see little reason for it now.

STANTON:

He probably has reasons by the dozen.

LINCOLN:

Who, Campbell? Let us not speculate about somebody's reasons for wanting something there is no reason to think he will get. Now as to Grant and Lee. I did talk to Grant, and Grant talked to me; and there was no difficulty in our understanding each other. Sherman was there, too, and Admiral Porter. Sherman, somewhat to my surprise, thought what I thought and Grant thought. In short, the Commander in Chief and his two best generals discussed the terms upon which they would accept surrender. These were the terms—in Grant's case—that came to you by telegram this morning. They are the terms everyone will know tomorrow, as you say. They are the terms the Secretary of War is bound to honor.

STANTON *looks at him sharply*. LINCOLN *appears not to notice*

The substance of them is that Lee's army will cease to be an army and go home; and further, as long as its members, both officers and men, abide by their paroles, they will not be molested by you, by me, by anybody. Is this your understanding of them?

STANTON:

You say I am bound to honor them—like that.

*Snaps his fingers*

LINCOLN:

*After a second's hesitation*

I say the Secretary of War is.

STANTON:

Is this a threat? You ask me to resign?

LINCOLN:

Nothing would be more painful to me, Stanton. Is *that* a threat?

STANTON:

Then you are not consulting me as Secretary.

LINCOLN:

*Hesitates again*

No, I am not.

STANTON:

You are ordering me to honor what four Senators,  
An hour ago, denounced as rank dishonor.  
You force me to suppress my right desire,  
My natural desire, that those who hurt us—  
Well, so *much*—shall themselves be hurt  
That much and more. And *now*. Now is the time  
To break them into bits. You leave them whole.

LINCOLN:

I have seen them, Stanton, since you did. They were badly broken, let me tell you. As for the bits, would you obliterate all of those, or simply some? The brightest, say? The wisest? Is that your natural desire? I think it isn't, quite. As for the Senators——

STANTON:

Nevertheless you are ordering me and them——

LINCOLN:

No, I am ordering *you*. Four Senators or forty—I cannot order *them*. And neither must the Secretary of War. You *are* that man? I'm not mistaken?

STANTON *stamps up and down before the desk, then turns*

STANTON:

No, Mr. President, you are not mistaken.

LINCOLN:

Good!

*Breathes deeply and straightens up*

Good!

STANTON:

Not as to me, I mean. But as to Lee——

LINCOLN:

*Wearily*

Lee and the country, Mr. Stanton. Think of it that way. The war must really end. It has been destroying us all, and it must really end—must be, in so far as such a thing is possible, as if it never were.

STANTON:

Sumner thinks that is the way to lose it.

LINCOLN:

But we have won it, Stanton. And now I want it to stay won in such a way that it can be forgotten. This is how we do that. Sumner is wrong.

STANTON:

And if the entire Cabinet should say *you* were——

LINCOLN:

Why, I should overrule them.

STANTON:

I remember how you told us, when you read  
The Proclamation to us, that your mind  
Was perfectly made up. You only wanted  
Suggestions as to the text; the idea—no.

LINCOLN:

But it was *your* idea. So you didn't mind.

STANTON:

True, I didn't. But responsibility——

LINCOLN:

I take it all.

*To SPEED*

Joshua, hello. You haven't heard any of this, have you? Mr. Stanton wouldn't like to think you had.

*STANTON waves a hand brusquely and starts pacing the floor again*



I have been meaning to tell you, Joshua, about a picture of Lee my boy Robert showed me at City Point. He brought it in at breakfast, one morning on the *Malvern*. I told him it was the face of a good man. One of our best men—I have always thought so, and I think so now. Terribly mistaken, but a good man. A pity when a good man is mistaken. Of course I have never doubted that he was mistaken; and neither has he, perhaps, though he would have had his own way of realizing this, just as he would have had his own way of realizing that I could think I was mistaken too. I could, you know. I have.

SPEED:

You have indeed—too many times, of course,  
For your own happiness. A deep disease.

MARY LINCOLN *comes in, unnoticed except by STANTON, who continues to pace the stage*

LINCOLN:

*Like SPEED, unaware of MARY LINCOLN's presence near the door*

You know it best, and once you were afflicted with it too. Otherwise, I suppose, we should never have got on so comfortably together, like a pair of old shoes both of which pinched in the same place. But I haven't told you the most interesting fact about Lee's face. His doubts have never made him ugly. Mine—well, they haven't made me beautiful. Only once have I been called beautiful.

*Dips his head, makes a face, and smiles*

That was last year, when Mrs. Harvey, widow of the Governor of Wisconsin, came to see me about certain hospitals she wanted built. Her husband had gone down after the battle of Shiloh to

move supplies for his wounded troops, and the poor man was drowned. She went South herself, and became convinced that more men in the hospitals there were dying of the heat than of their wounds. So she asked for hospitals in the Northwest, and particularly of course in Wisconsin. I told her No, but she came the next day—came every day until she broke me down. She was a fine woman. I liked to have her here.

*Swings his arm to indicate the room*

She was handsome; I admired her will. I confess I deceived her toward the end. I kept on saying No when the truth was that I had got an order written—remember, Stanton?—I had to convince you after she convinced me—

*STANTON pays no attention to this*

an order for at least three hospitals to be built. Then on the last day I had to say Yes. I showed her the order—one of the hospitals was to be named for her husband—and for the first time she was speechless. I almost was myself, though I didn't cry as she did. Then something possessed me—I can't imagine what—to say to her: "You almost think I am good-looking, don't you?" And she exclaimed: "Why, Mr. President, I think you are beautiful!" Of course she was in no state then to judge such things.

*SPEED laughs—then breaks off as MARY LINCOLN comes forward, raging*

MARY LINCOLN:

What woman was that! Tell me, who was that!

*LINCOLN, turning and seeing her, crosses over to where she stands. He shows great distress, and holds out both hands as if to help her. But SHE steps back, away from him*

Handsome! And you admired her! And she called you  
Beautiful! No dead or living woman  
Must speak of you that way. At City Point  
I had enough of Mrs. General Ord,  
And for that matter Mrs. General Grant—  
Who wants, I still think, to be mistress here!

LINCOLN, *appalled, looks back in turn at SPEED and STANTON, his shoulders sagging, but with no shame in his voice when he begins to speak*

LINCOLN:

Now, Mother, remember I said at breakfast that this was bound to be one of my busiest days.

MARY LINCOLN:

Don't think I care if Joshua is listening,  
Or that man Stanton. *He* should *fire* a general  
Whose wife can play the wanton as she did—  
That woman Ord, whose mouth, when she came over,  
Wouldn't have melted butter. There she had been  
Closer to you than I was—riding, oh,  
So cleverly on that ridiculous horse,  
Right by the President, and she no more  
Than a poor general's wife. Oh, she came over,  
Once the review was done, and made such scrapes,  
Such curtseys! She was so *entranced* to see me.  
And all the time her eyes were rolling, rolling,  
At no one else but you—and Mrs. Grant,  
Who seemed to be in on the secret also.  
I know *she* wants to be here where *I* am.  
I told her so, and she denied it—oh,  
So sweetly. It was *very nice*, I said,

To be here where *I* am. But anyhow,  
I had enough of *her*. And now I hear  
Of Mrs. Harvey! *Who* is Mrs. Harvey?  
How dared she say such things to you—how *dared* she!

LINCOLN *waits until he is sure she has finished, then turns again to* SPEED and STANTON

LINCOLN:

Gentlemen, you will excuse me I know for a few minutes.

*He goes past her to the door, which he holds open until, suddenly, SHE starts weeping*

MARY LINCOLN:

Oh, my dear, I'm sorry. What I said  
I never meant to say. And now it's more,  
I know, than you can bear—or I can live with.  
What's to become of me? I'm *so* afraid.

*He pats her shoulder, then lets her go out under his arm. HE follows, closing the door behind him*

SPEED:

*After a silence*

A terrible change in her. This is the worst,  
However, I have seen.

STANTON:

And so with me.  
A pity, certainly. I feel for him.  
She is a whole day's work for any man;  
And every day for *him*, as if no other  
Trouble ever was. I feel for him.

SPEED:

*Looks carefully at STANTON*

Thank you for that. I was afraid you wouldn't——

STANTON:

Wouldn't! Wouldn't! Well, you know it now.  
All sorts of people have all sorts of notions  
Of what I can or cannot feel—*cannot*  
Is usually their guess, and usually  
They're right; though *will* not would come closer home.  
No time for such indulgences, I say;  
And mean it. Yet his case is extraordinary,  
Because *he* is. You may not know it, Speed—  
Few do—but I have more love for that man,  
In spite of his misjudgments, than I have  
For any other living; and I include  
Myself.

*Does not smile*

Now this reminds me—why do you think  
She said “no living or dead woman?” Dead!  
Living, of course; you should have heard the tales  
Of how she cut and slashed poor Mrs. Ord  
At City Point—for the offense of cantering  
Abreast of him while he reviewed the troops;  
And then poor Mrs. Grant for trying to soothe her  
By explaining that the lady had been asked:  
That Mrs. Lincoln was late to the review,  
And someone had to ride. His gentleness  
With her that day was unbelievable,  
They tell me, unless witnessed. But why no dead one?  
Dead—what could she mean? Or is she mad?

SPEED:

I don't know, Mr. Stanton. All these years  
She probably has doubted that he loved her—  
Completely, anyway. She must remember—  
Of course she does—how hard it was to make him  
Come to the mark and marry her. He suffered  
Equally with her because of that;  
I knew him well, and thought *he* would go mad,  
So shamed he was by his irresolution:  
A quality in himself he rather enjoyed  
Till it afflicted others; till it—you know—  
Humiliated her. I have supposed  
That she imagines women before and after—  
Long ago and now—whom he could love  
Without such hesitation: all the way  
And simply, as his genius would direct him;  
And that among them there might be some girl  
Who died; and so his only love sleeps there.  
I say I have supposed this. I don't know.  
He never told me anything of the kind.  
So it would have to be, as I have said,  
Imagined. She is capable of that.

STANTON:

I see. Well, it's absurd. He is immune  
To females. They are nothing to him, nothing.

SPEED:

Oh, but you're wrong.

STANTON:

You think so?

SPEED:

He is powerful  
That way too; he sees and feels immensely—  
And it ends there. She has as little cause  
For jealousy as certain Senators  
Have to be doubtful of his loyalty—  
Not to them merely, I mean, but to us all.

STANTON:

*Snapping out of his mood*

All us Kentuckians?

SPEED:

You can't be serious.  
You know I mean to all of us there are,  
Past, coming, and to come. He keeps no less  
Than that in steady view. It is remarkable  
How easily he does it.

STANTON:

Or how stubbornly  
He tells us that he does it. Not that I doubt  
His honesty.

SPEED:

Who does?

STANTON:

Why, every rebel.  
To them he is compounded of low cunning

And highfalutin phrases. But they plan  
To profit by the phrases.

*Turns*

I must go.

SPEED:

Don't leave, or he will think you censure *her*.

STANTON:

A luxury I simply can't afford,  
To stay and reassure him.

*The door opens, admitting LINCOLN and JUDGE DAVID DAVIS, who is very fat. LINCOLN does a fair job of looking as if nothing has happened*

Mr. President,  
I was about to go. If I see Sumner,  
I think I know your views—if he should ask.

LINCOLN:

Here is Judge Davis.

*Then, as if only now hearing* STANTON

Oh, he will ask. But it won't be a bona fide question. When Sumner asks you what *you* think his only purpose is to tell you what *he* thinks. I know what that is, on every point. And he knows my opinions; or if he doesn't he is entitled to guess. I think I'll let him do some guessing. Mind you, I regard Sumner as my friend. He is the sincerest of his faction. Some of the others I can suspect, as our Northern Democrats do, of a desire to ruin the South so that the North—particularly the *Northeast*—will grow richer than it already is. It was rich to begin with, or the war



might never have been won. But the war has made it *very* wealthy, and it wants to keep that wealth: even at the cost of a continuing blight where slavery used to be. They will blame the blight on slavery, and call it a punishment even unto the third generation. But greed will be the mainspring of their action—so the Democrats say, and I pay more attention to them than they give me credit for.

STANTON:

Shall I inform them?

*Sarcastically*

It would make them happy.

LINCOLN:

*Ignoring this*

But they are wrong if they find this true of Sumner. His sincerity is that of a fanatic—terrible too, yet it is pure and simple. One thing that keeps me awake at night, gentlemen,

*He includes them all*

is the fear that the violence of this war has created a violent nation—one nation, in a sense that it never was before, and wild at heart. The future of it is beyond our present imagination; and the power of it is a serious matter to contemplate. My hope is that it will recover its reason. My fear is that this may prove so difficult that most men will give it up as impossible and let the worst do what they will.

*Comes to as from a trance*

Now here is Judge Davis—I should call him Justice Davis, now that he is a member of the Supreme Court, but I can't forget our

days together on the circuit in Illinois—the Eighth Judicial District.

DAVIS:

Or, Mr. President, the nights.

*To the others*

We held  
An Ogmorthorial Court, before the fire  
In some cold county seat—Urbana, Danville,  
Charleston, or Decatur—and this lawyer  
Often was fined because of his exorbitant  
Fees—exorbitantly small. They threatened,  
Some of us thought, the life of our profession.

*Chuckles, unaware that STANTON is not amused*

STANTON:

I have a thousand things to do this morning.

*Starts to go*

DAVIS:

But Mr. Secretary, I find it fortunate  
That you are here. I came to ask,  
And might as well ask you—not as a Justice,

*Smiles at LINCOLN*

But merely as one member of a violent  
Nation,

*Ceases to smile*

whether martial law continues  
Long with us or short. It may be soon  
To ask it, but I wonder.

STANTON:

*Snapping the words*

That is a matter  
For my decision, under the President.  
As long, certainly, as it is needed.

DAVIS:

Of course, of course. Only, was it ever  
Needed where no armies were in danger?

STANTON:

You mean in Indiana and Ohio.

LINCOLN *listens carefully*

DAVIS:

I merely ask you, as a million might,  
Whether the end is visible of law  
By generals, not judges.

STANTON:

And I say,  
That is a matter for decision *here*.

*Stamps on the floor. Both MEN look at LINCOLN, who has  
started walking back and forth by the window*

LINCOLN:

*As if to himself*

We may look black in history for filling Federal prisons with  
thousands of men who shouldn't have been there, since their worst

crime was to tell us of our faults. I could have done more than I did to temper this procedure. It pains me when I hear it said that I gave new rights to one race and robbed another of its old ones. The question is, of course, whether I would have looked blacker had I been too weak and lost the government—as the old farmer said of his wife who wasn't in the wagon when he got home—"somewhere between here and hell." It is a difficult question, and good men disagree.

STANTON:

The second error would have been the worse.

LINCOLN:

Yes, yes, I really think that. Yet the names some Northern Democrats call me have a certain sound, Mr. Secretary, to which I am more sensitive than you are.

*He has stopped walking, and is looking down through the window*

Now here comes a new test of how thick my skin is. Gentlemen, I must ask you to leave me alone with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They will be here in less than a minute.

*Goes to the door and calls through*

John, send the Senators right in. But Joshua, you come back. Mr. Secretary, I know you are busy. Judge, did you have something special on your mind? That is, besides——

*SPEED nods and leaves, following STANTON*

DAVIS:

No, Mr. President. It was broad and general.

LINCOLN *smiles and holds his hands as far apart as DAVIS' girth is, measuring. DAVIS smiles too*

I came, if you must know, chiefly to see  
With my own eyes how tired you have become,  
And how much older one more year has made you.  
They told me stories, and I wanted facts.

LINCOLN:

Well?

DAVIS:

My diagnosis: you will thrive again.

LINCOLN:

My excellent old friend!

*Shakes DAVIS' hand vigorously as he goes out—passing WADE, CHANDLER, and SUMNER as they enter; WADE, however, looks back at DAVIS curiously*

Well, gentlemen, I expected you. In fact, I saw you crossing the avenue, arm in arm.

SUMNER:

*He wears a brown cape under which can be seen a maroon vest and lavender pantaloons. He flourishes a gold-headed cane*

But Mr. President, that wasn't so.

LINCOLN:

Then, Mr. Sumner, mind in mind. You came as one man anyhow. Which of you will speak for all? Mr. Wade? Mr. Chandler? Did you meet Mr. Stanton, by the way?

ALL:

Stanton?

LINCOLN:

He stayed longer than he intended, so that if you sent him——

SUMNER:

But Mr. President, we sent nobody.  
We come as one man—it is true—to ask  
What you intend to say tomorrow night.

LINCOLN:

Tomorrow night! Isn't that a long way off? But even so, I don't quite understand why you think you can ask me.

*WADE snorts as if he could make it clear, but CHANDLER restrains him, indicating that SUMNER is the spokesman, as he proves to be—pompously*

SUMNER:

The times are perilous, as of course you know,  
With much in them that no event resolves  
Unless it be the work of many minds.

LINCOLN:

Mine too?

SUMNER:

Certainly, Mr. President. None more.

LINCOLN:

Thank you, Senator. Otherwise I have been wasting my time in the composition of a speech to be delivered from the balcony of this house tomorrow night. You seem to have heard that I promised something less impromptu than serenades require. You must agree that I should study what I say.

SUMNER:

We do. And that is why we three are here.

LINCOLN:

You will be impatient with me, though, when I tell you I haven't fully decided. The speech is not finished.

SUMNER:

So much the better, Mr. President.  
There is so much now that is unresolved.  
Victory, yes. And happily, a surrender——

WADE:

*Who* surrendered?

SUMNER:

That is not our question.

WADE:

It's *my* question.

SUMNER:

No. We must accept  
The fact of a surrender; then go on

To counsel with you as to what should follow:  
The Negroes, first of all, and then the States.

LINCOLN:

Why not the States and then the Negroes? The Negroes, bless them, will have to live in States—or are there to *be* States, gentlemen? I am assuming so in my address; I am even assuming that a few exist already—barely exist, to be sure, but——

CHANDLER:

Barely is just the word. You mean those little Governments it pleased you so to make  
When no one else was watching.

WADE:

Zach, be still.

LINCOLN:

*To WADE*

That's all right, Senator. He means Louisiana, for instance. I'm glad he recognizes Louisiana.

CHANDLER:

Recognizes!

*The SENATORS look at one another, embarrassed into silence  
for a moment*

SUMNER:

Well! But there are others.



LINCOLN:

*As if unaware that a sensitive issue has been exposed*

Now I have been putting down some thoughts about Louisiana, and I am delighted that you all agree it should be mentioned.

WADE:

Mentioned! That's sarcasm. Well, it goes  
With something else I've noticed. Mr. President,  
I know the world's regard for you, and share it.

LINCOLN *looks at him doubtfully*

But the world is not informed, as after years  
I am, of your unconquerable pride.

LINCOLN *stiffens a little*

They call me blunt, they say I am a bull,  
A very mule for stubbornness; and so  
You say, out loud; I've heard you. And they call  
You humble.

LINCOLN *listens intently*

They don't see you as I do:  
A difficult, deep man whose one assumption,  
If I may say so, is superiority.

*Glances at SUMNER for confirmation, but SUMNER is looking  
uncomfortably at LINCOLN, who is looking at the floor*

You may not like the word, yet it explains  
The hard time we have here.

CHANDLER:

*Frowning*

Ben, be quiet.

LINCOLN:

*After a silence which he breaks by throwing his head back and raising his voice to indicate that he has made one decision out of many that were possible*

Let him talk. But it won't be to me, however much he sounds like someone I saw recently in Richmond. I've had enough of that, true or untrue. Gentlemen, I leave you here

*Starts toward the door*

to tell one another anything you please. The walls do not have ears. Meanwhile, I have much to do—a speech to write, some unimportant people to see, and about sixty documents to endorse. You must excuse me now.

*Shows each a chair and resumes his way to the door, pretending not to know that they are on his heels*

SUMNER:

But, Mr. President, we have advice!

LINCOLN:

Good! Give it to yourselves. Pass it back and forth and polish it up. It may be a little rough in its present state.

CHANDLER:

It's rough enough, and ought to be, considering——

LINCOLN:

Gentlemen, good morning! Day after tomorrow, possibly, we can talk to better purpose. For we must keep on talking. You are not my enemies, I know. This is not good-by.

SUMNER:

*With him at the door, WADE and CHANDLER behind*

I am your one devoted friend among us;  
And so I say, in true and tried affection:  
Mr. President, you may regret this.

LINCOLN:

So I may. But I'd be sorrier, Senator, if I said all I am tempted to say.

*Suddenly relaxes*

We might never again go to the theater together. That would be terrible, for I enjoy seeing a good play with you. Or even a bad one.

SUMNER:

And I with you.

*Arranges the folds of his cape with great care, then takes a step toward LINCOLN, smiling and lowering his voice a little*

Next week, I understand,  
There is one to which we both can feel *superior*.

CHANDLER nudges WADE

LINCOLN:

Excellent!

*Smiles briefly, then addresses all three as before*

But of course I can't plan any playgoing now. This other matter presses me too hard. Tomorrow night, that is, or if not then, soon after, I have some things to say—quite simply and directly—to the

South if it will listen. I am studying now, or should be, how to catch their ears. Your only thought is about how they must learn to live again with us. You don't appear to consider that we must live with them, and that this will take some learning too. I'm doing my best to remember both parties to the divorce—a miserable divorce, if any at all, for neither party could move away. Meanwhile, gentlemen, let us all study to avoid a certain dictatorial tone—it may be mine, it may be yours—that is not to be tolerated in such perilous times. It is what *makes* the times perilous. Such is my conclusion, gentlemen, as of this painful moment.

*He appears to suspect for the first time that they intend to leave him. THEY are close together at the door; CHANDLER has his hand on the knob*

But aren't you staying? You are very welcome.

*THEY look at one another; hesitate; but none of them speaks*

Good day, then, gentlemen.

*HE holds the door wide open for them, and THEY go out—SUMNER last, puzzled. LINCOLN does not follow, for SPEED enters*

SPEED:

You told me to come back. I wasn't far.

LINCOLN:

Why, Joshua, you must have been in the keyhole.

*Sits down, exhausted*

Did you hear anything?

SPEED:

Of course not. But they must have made you madder, Lincoln, that you ever like to be.

LINCOLN:

Oh, I don't know. A little anger may be good for the soul—if there is a soul, and I'm more inclined to think so than I used to be when I was a young philosopher in New Salem. In those days I could be sarcastic because I felt superior. Now I feel merely equal, and sarcasm doesn't go with that. But Joshua, I wonder if I'm too tired to make my speech tomorrow night as short as it should be. It threatens to be long. And legal. Yet why not legal? If law is coming home again, it had better be made welcome in its native language. Nevertheless, nobody may listen.

SPEED:

The best of them will listen best, as always.

LINCOLN:

But it could be that I have too much to say; though some will think I have too little. I must make it clear—this is confidential, understand—

SPEED *nods*

how unimportant it is to decide whether the seceded States have ever properly been out of the Union; that is, whether they anything more than *said* they seceded. For four years they have disliked my doubts upon this point; now they may like them better. Anyhow, here the States are where they always were; and the only question that seems real to me concerns the practical relation they shall have henceforth with the rest of us. The relation *must* be practical. What I am most tired of, Joshua, is righteousness and

rant. I want to sit down quietly and work things out. Also, I must try to save the Negroes from Sumner and his friends. That sounds funny, but he wants them all to vote tomorrow; whereas I want to see them educated first, however long that takes. Of course a few now are; well, let them vote, and send the others off to school. But there's my speech, and it threatens to be windy. Pray, Joshua, that it be short and good, and that they listen.

SPEED:

You never used to ask that favor—prayer.

LINCOLN:

No, but I didn't dream then. I don't sleep, and yet I dream. Did you know that could be? It can. I dream of ships and moving shores; of rich men looking at themselves in mirrors, and seeing poor men there; of poor men looking, and laughing at what they see. I dream, Joshua, of being dead.

SPEED:

You *are* tired. Nobody knows how tired.

LINCOLN:

Nobody needs to know. It isn't important, considering all those who are truly dead. *They* don't dream any more. I understand, Joshua, that there are half a million of them.

SPEED:

More, Stanton says. But not a million.  
He says it will be far short of a million.

LINCOLN:

A comfort, I suppose.

*Smiles wryly*

Joshua, I do hope you understand that I don't feel superior any more.

SPEED:

I never thought you did, even in *those* days.

LINCOLN:

Well, then, I fooled you; for that was how I felt—and have, actually, in days more recent than you would guess. Wade thinks I still do.

SPEED:

Wade? But the pot thinks every kettle black.

LINCOLN:

*Looking out of the window*

I wish Judge Douglas were alive.

SPEED:

Douglas?

LINCOLN:

Why not?

*Musing*

The Little Giant. He was ambitious, but so was I—only Mary knows how much.

*He waits to see if SPEED will discuss MARY LINCOLN, and when he does not, continues*

We were rivals for everything; last of all, for this place here. They say I rose on his shoulders, and I guess I did. They were strong shoulders—honorable shoulders—and it would do me good to tell him so as I never did while he still lived; even, Joshua, when the war had just begun and he went West to tell the Democrats they must support me. That effort, and the cold spring weather, killed him. And now I dream I am dead beside him.

SPEED:

Abe! Don't say that word again. Now don't.

LINCOLN:

"Dream"?

SPEED:

"Dead."

LINCOLN:

All right, Joshua, I never will,

*Gets up*

at least in your hearing.

*Shouts outside*

There is a new party on the lawn, expecting some remarks. I must go out and ask them to wait until tomorrow night. What then, Joshua? What then? Pray for my speech, that it may say the one right thing. What *is* the right thing, Joshua?

SPEED:

The thing that you will say. I have no doubts.



LINCOLN:

Good, Joshua. You never did. I had them for us both.

SPEED:

Have them for neither of us, Mr. President.

LINCOLN:

All right, if you say so.

*Starts out, then pauses*

My job, you know, is beginning only now.

*Straightens up suddenly and smiles*

SPEED:

You mean out there? You mean tomorrow night?

LINCOLN:

Oh, no. I mean, I am free at last to be President of the United States. This has been everything but that, Joshua; and a long time to wait. Think of it, Joshua! The United States!

*As he goes out, the shouting increases and there is the noise of a brass band, and firecrackers*

*Curtain*



## Scene Six

*The same as Scene One, which now resumes as if nothing had interrupted it.*

MARY LINCOLN, as SPEED leaves her side, weeps again, lost to what goes on about her; though now and then she glances with distaste at STANTON, waiting to address DANA.

*The light, fading over her, follows SPEED, who slowly approaches SUMNER and DAVIS while shouts and cries of men and women on the street are heard.*

"They say it was an actor." . . . "Booth, the actor, shot him in the head" . . . "The back of it—the coward!" . . . "They say he has been caught" . . . "No, no, he hasn't—nobody knows a thing" . . . "What is the government doing?" . . . "What government?" . . . "Do we still have a government?"

ANONYMOUS 1:

The crowd will never hush, nor leave this place  
To its poor memories of former time.

## ANONYMOUS 2:

Its only history will be his death,  
To the last tick of doom.

*The light now pauses over the three men*

## SPEED:

I overheard  
You, gentlemen. I knew him, Justice Davis,  
Ten years before you did, when he was poor  
As never since, though not more melancholy.  
Yet he had all the sadness one can bear,  
And all the humor too; enough of both  
For genius. I remember how he said it:  
"Genius," as of something not in him—  
In anyone but him. And I remember,  
Certainly, his strength; there was more of it  
Than civil men have need for, and his every  
Thought, you know, was civil; it was the form  
That generosity took on in him.  
But I have heard you, and I must be witness  
To one thing with the Judge; he was reluctant,  
Past any man I knew, to think the worst  
Until the worst was there; or to assign  
Purpose when only consequence was seen.

## SUMNER:

Well,

*Pointing through door*

there's the consequence.

SPEED:

And there's a man  
Who would go slowly now in search of causes.  
He knew how many hatreds in the world  
Were pointed straight at him; he knew how many  
Wanted him to die—the stricken mothers  
Of some of his own soldiers; and Duff Green  
In Richmond—I've been told of that tall cursing;  
And here at home, a Senator or two.

SUMNER:

Speed!

SPEED:

Or three or four. You know their names,  
And none of them is yours.

DAVIS:

Now, Joshua——

SPEED:

Well, David——

SUMNER:

Never say it in the street.

*Noises of the crowd have risen again*

SPEED:

I never will; though who is ignorant now  
Of the long, silent war he fought with Congress?

Four years of that; and latterly the silence  
Threatened to crack. But I had just begun  
My list of those who hated this good man—  
This dangerous man, *unless* he had been good,  
Because he was so strong; if after all  
That is the word. He wasn't merely strong,  
Just as he wasn't merely weak; he was Old  
Proteus to those who dared to think him either,  
So changeable he proved when we would grasp him.  
But there were certain ones whose only cause  
Would *be* his goodness; or those better ones  
That so unwillingly he hurt, the thousands  
Jailed in his name, by his authority,  
Because they were disloyal—or were called so,  
In malice and in zeal, by imbecile  
Informers—whom he called "foul birds and dirty  
Reptiles." He had reasons to be loathed  
Or loved, and there was nothing in between.  
Such were the times. But being so, they schooled him  
In all the caves of danger, which his mind  
Went in and out of as none else's did.  
He would assure us now that there were ten,  
Not one, and he would caution us to look  
Most carefully before we let our anger leap  
In the first natural direction—South.

SUMNER:

If natural, why not? Deny that much,  
And then where should we start? Meanwhile this plot  
Could thicken——

SPEED:

So you say there is a plot.

SUMNER:

I do. And Stanton does.

SPEED:

Of more than madmen,  
Meeting in smoky houses?

SUMNER:

Meeting wherever  
Jefferson Davis is, and Judah Benjamin,  
And others like them—nor are such men mad.  
They are malign. They meet no doubt in mansions,  
With pillars, hidden deep in honeysuckle.

SPEED:

The President, remember, had an unnatural  
Indifference to death. Or seemed to.

JOHN HAY, *detaching himself from a group of men with  
whom he has been standing, comes over to join the three*

John,  
Wasn't he always smiling at our fears?

HAY:

He smiled, but he had dreams.

SPEED:

*Speaking with difficulty*

He dreamed of dying.  
He told me so on Monday; and on Friday—  
Good Friday, too—it came; then no more dreams.

HAY:

To think that Lamon wasn't here. His latter  
Lifetime all was spent in guarding the man  
He worshiped. Like an old dog he did it, flouncing  
And uttering flamboyant growls. The President sent him  
Only on Tuesday to Richmond—nobody knows  
What for; but as he left he made his master  
Promise to ride out rarely, and never at all  
To go of an evening to the theater;  
As if he sniffed already who was there.

*THEY all stand silent, statuesque. STANTON now is heard dic-  
tating to DANA*

STANTON:

Send also to the Mayor of New York  
This message: "Have Chief Kennedy's detectives  
Summoned for comparison of reports;  
Discrepancies appear." And expedite.  
Find out from Bates if Grant is on his way.  
Send this to Colonel Lafayette C. Baker:  
"Enter town by none of the three routes  
You listed; notify by code when present."  
To Andrew Johnson, by a special courier:  
"The President is dead"

*DANA gasps and drops his pencil*

—this has to be ready,  
Dana; don't do that—"and the Chief Justice  
Awaits you with the oath."

*A DOCTOR comes through the door, tiptoes by MRS. LINCOLN,  
and touches STANTON on the shoulder*



DOCTOR:

Come, Mr. Stanton.

STANTON *wheels and goes out with him.* MRS. LINCOLN *stirs; looks; looks again; then screams as she gets to her feet, unsteadily, and runs after them—SPEED being the first to follow her*

MARY LINCOLN:

My husband! Oh, my God! I have given my husband  
To die with all those others!

*As SHE disappears through the door, most of the PERSONS in the room stand as if paralyzed; but SUMNER, DAVIS, and HAY go out soon after SPEED. Meanwhile the noises from the street have suddenly and completely ceased*

ANONYMOUS 1:

They are silent;  
Suddenly they are silent, as a hive is  
When the great bee departs.

ANONYMOUS 2:

They know by magic.

*The noises resume—louder, angrier, more mournful*

But listen! They have found their throats again.  
Listen! They are like ten thousand orphans——

ANONYMOUS 1:

White and black, who had the same sad father.  
They mourn him in one voice, but of its tones  
The dark predominates.

*Cries: "Oh, Lord, Massa gone." "Massa Linkum, gone to glory." "Oh, Lord, Mercy on us, Mercy on us, . . . Mercy on us"—they trail off*

*Re-enter HAY and SUMNER*

HAY:

I never saw  
Such peace on any countenance. The rest  
He sent for, being arrived, is infinite.

SUMNER:

You are a young man. I have seen it often.  
But never on a face it so became—  
Or one whose sleep was bitterer for me.

*Re-enter DAVIS and SPEED*

SPEED:

Let us two meet—tonight, if you have leisure—  
And talk of the old days.

DAVIS:

I shall have leisure,  
As *he* had, always. Yet these latter years  
You know were not his least.

SPEED:

They were his greatest.  
Who could have guessed what strength? It grew in him  
With the first pressure; and as that increased—  
It seemed at times the weight of the whole world—  
He said, let there be more. But he was strongest

In his last words he spoke there on the lawn  
To the bloodthirsty crowd. He made them wait  
For some triumphant message. And he read it  
As lawyers do their briefs. It looked ahead,  
Not backward, to the level fields of order  
When right relations between State and State  
Should grow as trees do in well-watered ground.  
No triumph, and no blood.

DAVIS:

And no wild talk  
Of treason. It was a failure with the crowd.  
They left him, one by one. I heard of that,  
And pitied him.

SPEED:

He knew it would be so.  
That was the strength I mean—to disappoint them  
By saying what they nevertheless must say  
Themselves when they are serious as he was.

DAVIS:

They thought him sane too soon.

SPEED:

He always had been.  
That was the miracle. But now what chance  
Of anyone else's being?

DAVIS:

We must hope;  
And help, if it is in us.

SUMNER, HAY, DAVIS, and SPEED go slowly out as all the PERSONS in the room desert their posts and start moving about. They continue moving, with as little noise as possible, while the lights settle on the two ANONYMOUS GENTLEMEN, whose lips can be seen forming words before any are heard. Then these are heard, antiphonally

ANONYMOUS 1:

The world will never forget what he did here . . .

ANONYMOUS 2:

His goodness will not perish from the earth.

*Curtain*





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